COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

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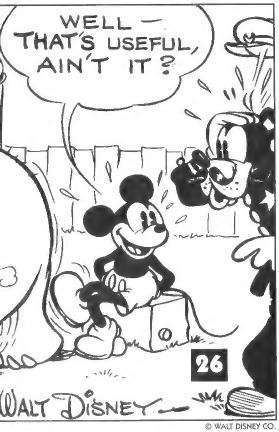

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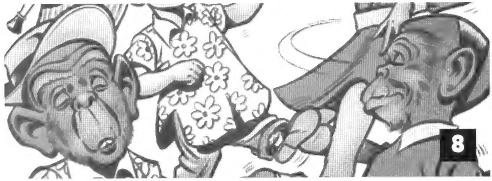

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Issue Number 95, October 2002

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to our big Disney issue! Well, actually...to the first of two big Disney issues! Our focus for this issue was going to be the comic art of Disney, both in the newspaper strips and in comic books, but then two things happened: First, Alberto Beccatini's article on Disney newspaper strips turned out to be much longer than I first anticipated, and I didn't want to cut it down. And second, Bruce Hamilton had promised an article on Disney comic books, which hasn't arrived yet. So, ye olde editor had to decide that in this issue we will cover the newspaper Disneys and postpone the Bruce Hamilton article on Disney comic books to a future issue. (But not the very next issue, which spotlights Milton Caniff.)

Reading Bill Baker's interview with Alex Simmons in *CBM* 94, where Alex was reminiscing about dressing up like Batman, gave me an idea for a feature that should be a lot of fun. Most of us have done that...when I pretended to be Superman or Captain Marvel, a bath towel pinned around my neck became my cape, and that was all the costume I needed.

After seeing one of the Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan movies, which were the most wonderful of all for me, I would run around our neighborhood wearing a loin cloth, shooting my bow and arrow and throwing my knife for weeks. Of course, I had several tree houses, and when I was sitting up there in the tree house, I *was* Tarzan. At other times, I was Roy Rogers or the Lone Ranger. For some reason, I was never Hoppy. Sometimes I would wear my guns backwards and be Wild Bill Elliott. Once when the folks next door were throwing an old worn-out saddle in the trash, I rescued it, and with the help of a timber placed in the fork of one of our cherry trees, I had me a "horse." I would ride that horse for hours at a time. My horse's name was usually Trigger.

So when Alex talked about playing Batman and Robin, I knew that there must be hundreds of us comic fans out there who did the same thing. I want to run a photo feature of all of us, as little kids, dressed up like one of our comic book or movie heroes. I'll bet that most of you have an old snapshot showing you dressed up and pretending to be Roy or Hoppy or Batman or Spiderman. Send it in to *CBM*, or send a copy or a scan of it, and we'll include it in this feature!

Russ

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MARKETPLACE MAIL

No complaints, almost

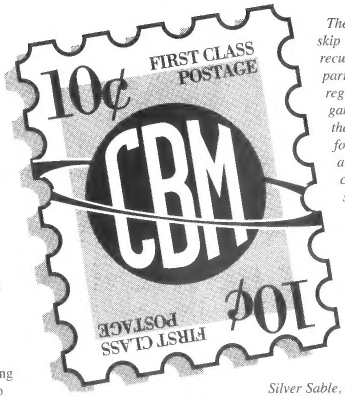
I doubt any Spider-fan had much to complain about with the fifth *CBM Special Edition*, especially those like myself who were too caught up in their own personal webs to have purchased every *CBM* issue that had a Spider-Man article. I only wish the interior color section had more art and less text (who needs text in color?).

Now, about the new article by Arnold Blumberg about "How Spider-Man Traded Villains," he was accurate in pointing out Kingpin's emigration to Daredevil during the Miller years, but failed to point out Spidey's biggest defection of the Silver Age, The Rhino. After a humiliating defeat in *Spider-Man* #43 which left our villain "stripped" of his dignity, The Rhino jumped ship and set up shop in the pages of *The Hulk* (issue 104, from June, 1968, to be exact, a year and a half after his last *ASM* appearance), becoming a frequent antagonist to old Jade Jaws. The Rhino has reappeared in more recent Spider-Man books, but I believe he tends to be associated more with the Hulk's villains gallery.

Speaking of which, The Ringmaster was not originally a Spider-Man villain (though Blumberg does not overtly say he was), but rather one of the Hulk's, appearing first way back in *Hulk* #3. Though, like his traveling circus, The Ringmaster tended to pop up in nearly every Marvel book, except the *FF*. Say, when's the *CBM FF Special Edition* coming out?

Also not mentioned in this article was The Black Widow's transformation from fishnet-stockinged baddy/damsel in distress to skintight jumpsuit-wearing do-gooder on the verge of her own short-lived series (*ASM* #86). Not to mention Ka-Zar and Zabu in *ASM* #57 & 58. Or the fact that Medusa, Quicksilver and The Black Widow were all introduced to the Marvel Universe as villains, while Ka-Zar was an anti-hero of sorts. All in all the TLC and lavish design of recent *CBM* issues has made me take notice. Keep it up.

Dan Horowitz
Venice, CA



The Rhino! I can't believe I dared skip over this Spider-villain turned recurring Hulk adversary—particularly since the horned one regularly received infusions of gamma energy for some time—so thank you for bringing it up! As for The Black Widow, Medusa, et al, I deliberately avoided any characters whose hero/villain standing was either ambiguous or later redefined. Instead I was mainly focusing on characters who were definitively villainous—although even The Ringmaster later put in some public service time in the pages of The Incredible Hulk, *and of course there was The Sandman's long flirtation with "good work" alongside Silver Sable, and—um, let's just leave it at that, shall we?*

AB

He did inhale

I have been a customer of yours for many years, and from many different countries—and *CBM* continues the quality publications you have always provided.

I have always been a "collector" first and foremost and, of course, if you make a bit of money buying and selling, then that bankrolled some of your expenditures (and kept the wife reasonably happy). It appears to me that with the advent of slabbing, the hobby has been divided into two distinct parts—the investors (who buy slabbed comics) and the collectors—who buy the best condition of what they can afford. If you have the money slabbing gives you safety of grading, whereas we have all been stiffed somewhat after a seller's "over-zealous" self-grading. However most collectors who are not in it for investment are happy with a VG/F copy of a comic that you can read/hold/feel and "smell" (even a cheap/scrappy comic can give you that pleasure of opening a comic and experiencing the "four-color smell" memories all over again—perhaps this is more important to me growing up in UK where USA comics were less easily available). Certainly the pleasure of the smell and feel of a comic is taken out of the equation when in a plastic box.

What is the average cost of slabbing? Is it taken as a percentage of the value of the comic? If an $80 comic suddenly becomes worth 200 percent of *Guide*—so the $80 increase in value surely does not reflect the cost of

grading and sticking it into a box.

I believe slabbing will scare some would-be collectors away and after the initial highs we could see a distinct falling off of these "false values" (especially if the economy comes back and the share market takes off, and all these investors want to put their money into shares or property—just a thought). But who really knows. I don't think I'd be confident paying multiples of *Guide* thinking such values would be maintained.

Best regards,

Alan Reeves
Melbourne Australia

Nai-man is The Man

In response to Brian Oursler's statement in issue 93: "I am slowly losing interest in Michael Naiman's editorials": What? You can't handle a little controversy? It's Michael's way of thinking that puts fresh takes on old worn subjects! He is the man that helped bring about the need for CGC to explain itself.

I could write an entire issue on what Naiman has done for this magazine; two issues on how Naiman has helped collectors world-over with his editorials!

Rick Davidson
Chula Vista, CA

Here's Johnny

Paul Wardle had a letter in *CBM* #93 where he talks about Johnny Craig doing conventions. He says "While it's true he did very few, he did appear at the 1972 EC Fan-Addict Convention." This is simply not true, Russ. You and I were both at the EC Convention back in 1972, and it's pretty easy to remember who was or wasn't there. The ones I remember missing from that convention were Reed Crandall, Graham Ingels and Johnny Craig.

I also don't believe that Johnny ever attended a convention up in Buffalo, as Wardle reports hearing from a fellow collector. The only appearance I heard about Johnny ever doing was at a comic shop there in Pennsylvania. Probably the same one with George Evans that Wardle refers to.

If anyone in Fandom remembers seeing Johnny Craig at a convention or at the book signing with Evans, please get in touch with me. I'd like to know about it and research it a little more. Thanks very much.

Roger Hill
ecfanaddicts@lycos.com

Compare the grading

There has been a lot of discussion and more than a little controversy regarding the grading standards utilized by CGC. The article in your August issue restated CGC's position that they are utilizing Overstreet grading standards in conjunction with "market" standards. Despite that statement, it seemed to me that CGC had, in fact, tightened grading standards compared to Overstreet's grading, especially at the high end.

Recently, a comic came to market that provided an opportunity to "compare" the two grading standards. Heritage Comics recently auctioned a copy of *Comic Cavalcade* #11 that had been graded by CGC. The book was offered in their July 2002 auction and was Lot # 5461.

Having previously owned this copy, I recognized it due to the distinctive initials on the front cover. I also remembered that this copy was actually pictured in the *Overstreet Comic Book Grading Guide*. It can be seen on page 98.

CGC has graded the comic as a NM- 9.2. The *Overstreet Grading Guide* has it graded as a VF 88.

While I still feel that CGC has, for the most part, tightened the grading standard at the high end, this comic is a perfect example of the arbitrary nature that is inherent in grading. A comic that is actually used in the grading guide to illustrate a VF 88 (now VF 8.8) condition comic is graded almost ten years later as a NM- 9.2 book.

Grading has always been, and will remain, an art and not a science, with a certain level of inherent inconsistency. Even when performed by experts.

Walter Clark
via e-mail

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Oddball Comics © 2002 by Scott Shaw! CBM95-9

5 COUNT THEM 5

POINTS OF ODDBALLEDNESS ALL ON ONE COVER!!

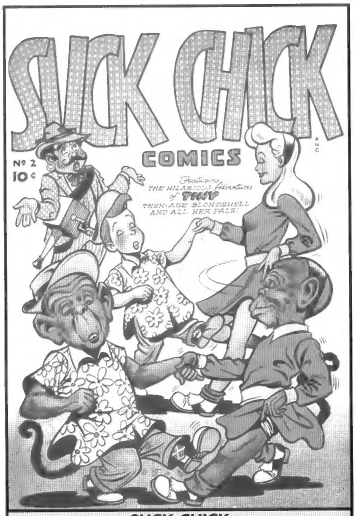
No, the title of this comic isn't *Suck Chick*; it only looks that way! This is due to its partially obscured and poorly designed logo. By any name, this comic's cover has more than enough elements to make it an Oddball classic (at least by my demanding standards):

- A rarely-seen plaid logo.
- Not one, but two anthropomorphic monkeys (and the female is giving us a peek of her underwear!).
- Two matching Hawaiian shirts.
- Two matching pairs of Argyle socks.
- An organ-grinder, an offensive Italian stereotype if ever I've seen one.

Supposedly illustrating this comic's lead feature "Tiny" (appropriately enough, by the pseudonymous "Frank Little"), absolutely nothing even remotely resembling the cover scene takes place within the comic. But, to be fair, how could any story live up to such an incredible cover?

Other stories included in this issue of *Slick Chick* include "Itchy" (a firehouse Dalmatian), "Burpy and the Boss" (an *Of Mice and Men*-like duo), "Sandy" (another teenage girl) and "Kid Dixon" (a red-headed boxer).

ODDBALL Factoid: Hawaiian shirts enjoyed a post-World War II popularity that was inspired, in part, by crooner Bing Crosby. "Der Bingle's" aloha fashion sense is well represented here!



SLICK CHICK
ISSUE NUMBER: 2
COVER DATE: 1947
PUBLISHER: Leader Enterprises
COVER ARTIST: Unknown

THE Greatest COMIC BOOK ever!

(well...for this month at least)

by Mark Squirek

The Silver Age of DC is chock full of recreations and reintroductions of Golden Age characters. Some, like The Spectre or Wildcat, arrived fully formed, a virtual reincarnation of their original selves. Others, like The Flash and Green Lantern, were completely reinvented and reconfigured. These heroes were reinvigorated with retooled identities, origins, lives and histories.

Some heroes were brought back with a tremendous fanfare (The Spectre quickly comes to mind), others slipped in with a couple of house ads and a wait-and-see attitude on the part of the editors (Starman and Black Canary over in *The Brave and the Bold*). There was one new hero who slipped into the Silver Age DC Universe with absolutely no fanfare whatsoever. She didn't even make the cover of the first magazine she appeared in.

Hawkman #4 shows an out-of-control Winged Wonder falling backwards to the hardness of the gray city street. He is being pulled down by "The Machine that Magnetized Men!" Murphy Anderson fills the cover with a perfect picture of a panicked Hawkman and the alliterative announcement should alert the attentive reader to the writing of Gardner Fox.

The splash page brings an unexpected challenge to the reader. Expecting a full page of Hawkman, we are instead introduced to someone new in the then-known DC Universe. A top-hatted sorceress splits the page in two. One half of the page shows Hawkman fighting Chinese Mongols; the other shows Hawkgirl flattening 20th century thugs with a slab of cement. There is no indication which side the sorceress is loyal to, Hawks or Thugs. She is identified only as "The Girl who Split in Two."

She didn't make the cover, but it is a beautiful first appearance. Murphy Anderson renders a beautiful, balanced page for the reader to take in. Zatanna stands, dominating the action.

Hawkman #4 (Oct/Nov 1964), first appearance of Zatanna.

[continued on page 66]

Accurate Comic History...

...Has Fandom to Thank. Jacquet's Evocative Essay Shows Why

by Michelle Nolan

The 45-year-old essay by comics pioneer Lloyd Jacquet published in *CBM* #88 was a fascinating reminder of how much the history of comic books owes to fandom.

The history of few, if any, other American cultural institutions is so greatly in debt to its enthusiasts. Comic fans have spent the past 40-plus years trying to discover truly arcane facts and to accurately interpret them.

Even during the 1950s and '60s, the earliest founders, editors and creators involved in the development of the American comic book often had fuzzy and incomplete memories at best, if only because virtually all of them knew only a small portion of the "big picture."

Bob Beerbohm, the indefatigable researcher into the history and origins of comics in a multitude of formats, has contributed an amazing number of significant discoveries, the last of which was this evocative essay by Jacquet from the July 1957 issue of *Newsdealer* magazine.

As Bob points out, the real value of the essay lies in its emotional tone. He is correct when he says Jacquet is not to be seriously faulted for the inaccuracies, generalizations and oversights in what may have been a rush job for *Newsdealer*, although as a journalist and historian I find such mistakes to be off-putting in the extreme.

However, as worthwhile as Jacquet's essay is, it's a vivid reminder of just how difficult it has been to sift through the fact and fancy, the fiction and fallacies, so often promulgated by early comics pioneers, including those only a couple of decades removed from the "front lines," as it were.

Until cartoonist Jules Feiffer came out with his uncannily accurate *The Great Comic Book Heroes* in 1965—really the first non-sensational work ever in a library-worthy format covering the first generation of comics—even remotely accurate information on the history of "modern" comic books had been extremely difficult to obtain during their first 30 years on the newsstands. More important from an academic standpoint, it had been even more difficult to gain an accurate perception of milestones and timelines.

Jacquet played a significant role in comics history, and not only because his Funnies Incorporated shop packaged so many Golden Age newsstand comics, beginning in 1939 with *Marvel Comics* #1. I was especially happy to see Beerbohm's latest contribution to comics history because Jacquet has been largely overlooked or forgotten.

Even so, Jacquet's essay for *Newsdealer* somewhat distorts both Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's historical importance and the overall development of comics in 1934-36. This probably occurred innocently enough, since Jacquet was not a polished professional writer and he had been Wheeler-Nicholson's first editor and apparently a friend and admirer as well.

There's no question that once-and-future pulp writer Wheeler-Nicholson deserves credit for having the ambition and vision to publish the first all-original newsstand comic books—the six tabloid-sized, 32-page issues of *New Fun*, subtitled "The Big Comic Magazine" (Feb 1935-Oct 1935). Contrary to Jacquet's recollections, by the way, the first issue was entitled *New Fun* on the cover, not just *Fun*, as he wrote.

Or was it, as several comics historians have hinted with perhaps merciless accuracy, less a case of Wheeler-Nicholson's vision and more a matter of money? Although Jacquet's essay provides no hint of this whatsoever, some leading comics historians dismiss Wheeler-Nicholson as an impecunious impresario who wanted to enter the comic book market without the burden of paying for reprint rights. Not that this was necessarily bad, since Eastern, Dell, McKay and United Features were much better capitalized than Wheeler-Nicholson while beginning their far more sophisticated reprint titles—*Famous Funnies*, *Popular*, *King* and *Tip Top*, respectively—during the three-year period covered by Jacquet.

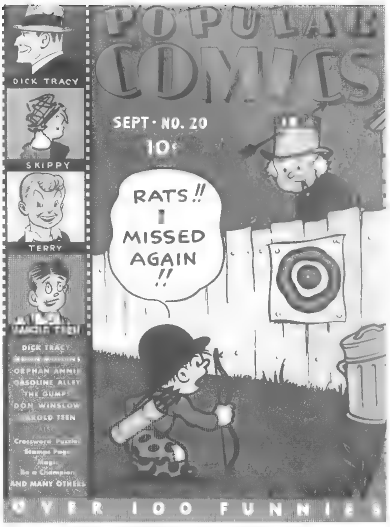
Even though Jacquet made it clear he was discussing what he called "original" comic books, I question the true nationwide impact of either *New*

Fun—which became *More Fun* with #7, when Wheeler-Nicholson wisely abandoned the tabloid format in favor of standard-size comics—or *New Comics*, which became *New Adventure* with #12 in January 1937 and *Adventure* with #32 in November 1938.

As fond as I am of old National (DC) Comics, my guess is that *Famous Funnies* (which began its irregular series in 1934) and *Popular*, *King* and *Tip Top* (which started in 1936) had far greater newsstand sales than the likes of *More Fun* and *New Adventure*, albeit with characters reprinted from newspapers. I believe these four titles, even though they did not feature original characters, paved the way for the commercial viability of Jacquet's "original" comics.

Jacquet, though, did not work for the major newspaper reprint comics publishers and so may have understandably underrated their commercial and historical significance. For that matter, I also suspect that the third long-running title with original stories, *Detective Comics*, soon became more important than either *More Fun* or *New Adventure*. Not many months after *Detective Comics* began with #1 in March 1937, Harry Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz bought out the financially strapped Wheeler-Nicholson.

Of course, no one will dispute that in the arena of "original comics," the vision of Vincent Sullivan, Max Gaines and Sheldon Mayer and their influence on the debut of *Action Comics* with Superman in 1938 was by far the most significant commercial event in the early history of comics.



Popular Comics #20 (Sep 1937), still more influential than **More Fun**.

Jacquet's brief mention of Sullivan, without a doubt one of the most historically important figures in comic book history, was nice but frustratingly sad. What Jacquet calls Sullivan's "own comic book business"—Magazine Enterprises—had been successful and aesthetically marvelous in earlier years. Yet by 1957 Sullivan published only a dozen comics, with a final nine issues to go in 1958 before his company faded into history.

Ironically, when Jacquet wrote this essay in 1957, his truly noteworthy role in comics history had been neither remembered nor appreciated—nor, to the best of my knowledge, had his significance been mentioned anywhere in print. It was only 18 years earlier that Jacquet's role proved historic in packaging the first comic book for pulp publisher Martin Goodman's *Marvel Comics*, in the wake of Jacquet's work with Bill Everett on the rare promotional title *Motion Picture Funnies*.

It's fascinating to note that had not Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others created the Marvel Age of Comics beginning in 1961, Jacquet's Golden Age milestone would probably be nothing more than an obscure footnote in comics history. In such ways is history rewritten.

For that matter, does anyone think DC's Golden Age comics would be appreciated even remotely as much as they are today had not Julie Schwartz and his cohorts revived The Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman and others in the Silver Age?

Another Jacquet irony: He lists *More Fun* as one of the longest-running original comics, which is true on the surface, considering that it ran 127 issues. But *More Fun* was the least successful of DC's "Big Eight" 1940s anthology titles, with only 56 hero issues (#52-107), and it failed as a humor title (#108-127), lasting fewer than three years in that format.

Just as collectors younger than 40 or so have no memories of life without comic book price guides, only middle-

aged comics enthusiasts understand the almost total lack of historical respect given to comic books outside of fandom until the second half of the 1960s. It's almost frightening how this legitimate—if so often crude—form of American pop culture spent 30 years "under the radar" in the current vernacular.

The vast majority of everything about comic books in magazines and books before 1965 was either outrageously negative screeds (*Seduction of the Innocent*, *Parade of Pleasure*, *Love & Death*) or astonishingly abbreviated in studies of comic strips, considering what a remarkable commercial phenomenon comic books became in their first three decades of existence.

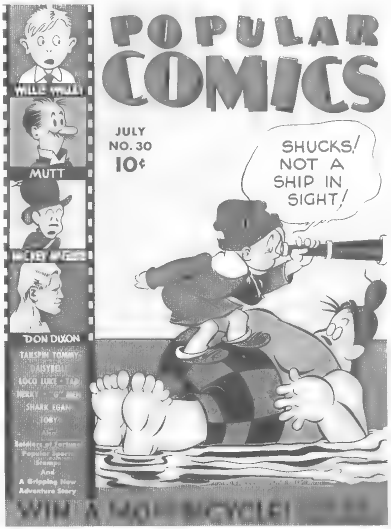
This paucity of information was also often stunningly inaccurate. Colton Waugh's otherwise excellent survey *The Comics* (1947) devotes only one chapter (much of it negative with regard to comic book aesthetics) and part of another chapter to comic books in a 354-page book.

Waugh devotes exactly ten lines to Major Wheeler-Nicholson's pioneering efforts, preferring to emphasize the dual importance of newspaper reprints and Superman just as I do. Waugh, a noted cartoonist in his own right, cites comic book circulation in 1946 as a then-record 40 million. Considering that 1,531 comics were published with 1946 dates (give or take a couple that may not exist), that figure of 40 million seems astonishingly low.

Even if every comic book sold only 100,000 copies, 40 million comics would represent 400 individual comics. And, rest assured, the vast majority of individual comics sold better than 200,000 issues in those days and not a few sold more than a million. I would think the actual circulation was something like more than 300 million in 1946.

Among the ten leading publishers Waugh cites in terms of circulation for 1946, he includes *Famous Funnies* (Eastern), which published a grand total of 24 issues including its then-fading monthly flagship title. He also includes United Features, which produced 30 issues, and Educational Comics, which published 17 issues. Obviously he placed great store on Buck Rogers, Nancy and Sluggo and historically important comics publisher Max Gaines of EC, but the reality did not match his suppositions.

Waugh completely ignored Standard Comics and Fiction House Comics, both of which had huge circulations in 1946 and published a combined 132 issues, along with Archie Comics, which enjoyed a burgeoning circulation albeit publishing only 27 issues. Nor did he mention Lev Gleason, which printed only 26 issues but sold fabulous numbers with *Crime Does Not Pay*, *Daredevil* and *Boy*.



Popular Comics #30 (Jul 1938), contemporary with **Action** #2.

Stephen Becker's generally splendid and scholarly *Comic Art in America* provides another glaring example of how little comic books were regarded in 1959, after one-quarter century of publication and more than 37,000 issues representing a circulation in the billions! In an otherwise credit-worthy historic survey of 378 pages, Becker dismisses comic books with a wildly misleading nine-page chapter entitled "More Big Business." I recall how disappointed I was when I first discovered this book in junior high school, since I doggedly tried to find out as much about comic book history as I could.

Becker's shockingly empty chapter is largely a rehash of Waugh's slightly more comprehensive chapter, complete with several inaccurate statistics—though nowhere does the name Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson appear, obviously a historical injustice. The following incredibly inept line appears regarding Superman: "...a dozen imitations had sprung to life; a fairly good one was Captain Marvel."

A dozen?

Even more stunningly incorrect was the statement that "M.C. Gaines, who had produced many of the more flamboyant early comic books, later turned out several of quieter and more permanent interest." Well, maybe, but—read on! One page later, in a brief discussion of crime and horror comics and the Comics Code, Becker writes, "Many comic book publishers joined the Comics Code Authority, committed to maintaining high standards; only Dell, now one of the major producers of comics, plus Gilbertson (sic) and Educational Comics, refused to join, on the justifiable grounds that they had never published a comic book which violated the standards under discussion."

As good old Bill Gaines himself might have muttered, "Good Lord...'choke'!"

But then, in Becker's preceding discussion of negative influences in violent comic books, he wrote "...there were only a handful of such comic books, but they were enough to arouse alarmed citizens..."

Only a handful?! Try telling that to any completeist of crime and horror comics!

It is one of the great ironies in American pop cultural history that virtually no information on comic books was available during their first three decades of existence, when circulation was stratospheric. Yet in the past 20 years, with comic book circulation an ever-problematic issue (pun fully intended!) and exposure to pre-teenagers almost nonexistent, information exploded about old comics along with a wonderful number of reprints.

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Words into Pictures: Visualizing Literary Works, Warts and Gnarls

Here is Kenneth Grahame's irrepressible Toad in full cry, singing a "little song" about himself:

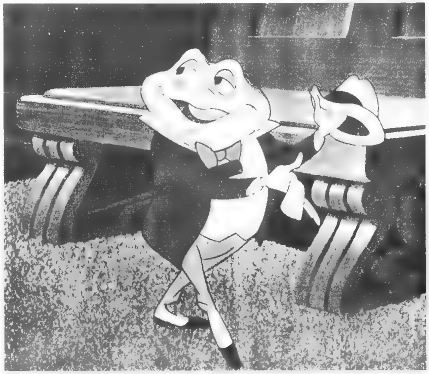
> The world has held great heroes, as history-books have showed; / but never a name / to go down to fame / compared with that of Toad!

Here, in a couplet and an internal rhyme, is Toad entire. Swollen with self-importance, blurting braggadocio in metered measures, Toad rises up before us and marches off to the beat of his own private drummer, blissfully unaware, it seems, of any personage of importance save himself. But the bloated arrogance of Toad's poetic posturing is deflated, ever so little but punctured nonetheless, by the very musicality of the utterance, the lilt of lyricism that hints at the love of fun that so animated the character in Grahame's classic, *The Wind in the Willows*. Perhaps, the scintillating rhythm suggests, Toad is not altogether serious. Perhaps his egotism is childish rather than pompous.

But Grahame's Toad is not the only Toad in Willows. Arthur Rackham's Toad dwells among the reeds along the same riverbank. And Ernest Shepard's. And Disney's. All illustrators of Grahame's ode to Nature and the natural in us all. And in the realm of visualizing, Disney has often dispossessed all the images that preceded his.

Who can think of Snow White and the seven dwarfs without the mind's eye conjuring up Grumpy and Dopey and the rest of the potato-nosed ensemble? Bland Bambi is forever coupled to a mischievous bunny named Thumper just as the wicked woodenhead Pinocchio is made perpetually appealing by a tiny top-hatted cricket acting as his conscience. And Paul Dukas' "Sorcerer's Apprentice" will always be Mickey Mouse in a floppy, pointed cap.

We should not be surprised, then, to discover that even as early as 1949, the year Grahame's Toad began cavorting on the silver screen, Disney had earned a reputation for the efficacy of his imposters. His adaptations of the characters of others were more lively and hence more living than their originals—particularly when the originals were literary creations that had existed, until Disney appropriated them, solely in between the lines of typography in a wholly verbal enterprise, altogether motionless. In animating them—in bringing them to life—Disney supplanted them.



Disney's Mr. Toad was dapper and graceful, the perfect English country squire.

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Rackham's Toad lived in gnarly Nature; here, in one of the chapter heading illustrations, he's in hiding, having escaped from prison.

In assessing Disney's rendition of Grahame's book, *Life* magazine noted, without a trace of rue, that "the film leaves out all the poetry and most of the subtlety, but it still has action enough for the children and wit enough for everybody. It is deft and pleasant throughout, ironic and goodhearted...good enough to convince Disney admirers that the old master can still display all the bounce and vitality he had before the war."

A trace of pique, if not outright sarcasm, infects the verdict over at the *New Republic* (October 24), which pronounced *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* "neither good taste nor bad. It shows a vivacious absence of taste; it is bright, sprightly, arch and obvious. The flavor of the originals is lost in garishness and pretension, and it was flavor principally that they both had to offer."

Right away, you can tell they don't like Disney movies over there at the *New Republic*. So why did they devote, from their precious allotment of pages per issue, even two paragraphs to *Mr. Toad*? Clearly, they see Disney as a threat to the American Way of Life and to Western Civilization as a whole, a menace that must be stopped out of sheer patriotic devotion before it smashes culture to smithereens.

I was, at the time, too young to realize all that. Disney's Toad—or, more precisely, pictures of his version of Toad as published in that November 21 issue of *Life*—was the first version of Grahame's immortal bumptious blusterer I ever saw, so I had no way of comparing it to the original and thereby assessing the damage being inflicted on evolutionary progress by the Mouse House minions.

On the screen, Disney tells the Toad story of *The Wind in the Willows* with lively panache. Among the animals along the River Bank, Toad is the squire, the occupant of Toad Hall, the local manor of majestic dimensions. He is also, we are told, a mad, reckless adventurer who has a mania for fads and leaps from one to another with complete abandon and unbounded enthusiasm. His latest mania is to dash giddily about the countryside in a canary yellow gypsy cart, wrecking everything in his path. As the bills for repair mount up, his friends, Rat, Mole and Badger, decide upon an intervention, but before they can get it properly executed, Toad falls in love with the first automobile he has ever seen. Touring the country's highways and byways in a motorcar becomes his new mania.

In the grip of this fresh enthusiasm, Toad buys a car he sees outside a roadside tavern, trading for it the deed to his

Disney portrayed Toad as every bit the wild adventurer that Grahame did.

Shepard's Toad was, as Grahame noted happily, "real"—or, as he might have preferred, "people."

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ancestral manse. Alas, the car he buys proves to be a stolen one, and Toad is arrested as the presumed thief. Through a stratagem, he escapes from jail (or "gaol," as the English have it), returns to the River Bank, discovers Toad Hall overrun with villainous weasels, and, disconsolate, seeks out his friends. Badger musters them all to reclaim Toad's patrimony. They storm Toad Hall and, in the ensuing hilariously frantic encounter with the weasels, recover the deed, which had been obtained under false pretexts. Toad is restored to his rightful place in the mansion on the River Bank, and peace reigns. For an instant. Then we see Toad aloft in a new fixation—piloting an aeroplane!

In Disney's hands, Toad is not only lively: he is graceful in every movement and thoroughly dapper, the perfect English country gentleman. And Disney deftly solves the most persistent of the problems in visualizing Grahame's tale -size. In Grahame's telling, the animals interact with humans, and while our imaginations easily envision a tiny toad talking and cavorting with humans, an artist, who must show the two species in the same pictures, has a difficult time of it. At a realistic scale, Toad is simply too small to be seen in the same picture with a normal-sized

Rackham's solution to the size predicament was about the same as every other illustrator's: he depicts him larger than a real toad—here, about the size of a Pekinese (this is a detail, see color section).

Shepard's Nature was nearly as gnarly as Rackham's.

human or to operate, say, the locomotive he commandeers to escape from prison.

A. A. Milne faced a similar problem in creating a stage version of the tale, "Toad of Toad Hall," in 1930. "In reading the book," Milne wrote, "it is necessary to think of Mole, for instance, sometimes as an actual mole, sometimes as such a mole in human clothes, sometimes as a mole grown to human size, sometimes as walking on two legs, sometimes on four. He is a mole, and he isn't a mole."

Grahame solved the problem with a simple albeit potent sleight of speech: "The train is Toad-size," he explained once; "and Toad is train-size."

Disney's solution is the same as our imagination's: on the screen, as in our mind's eye, we usually "see" only a portion of the total picture, the portion with Toad in it—at the controls of the locomotive, gripping the motor car's steering wheel, and so forth. And as a grace note resolving the incongruity with an internal contradiction, the doors of buildings through which the Disney Toad and his friends pass are normal, human-size; the

The only illustration in the first edition of the book (1908), the frontispiece by Graham Robertson. Not a toad in view, alas.

animals reach up to grasp the doorknobs. But the furniture they sit on in their homes is animal-size.

Grahame's animals in Disney's hands are undeniably given a human dimension. It was (and is) endemic in the Studio's efforts that everything it touches be anthropomorphized. Grahame's animals were no exception. But Grahame might very well have enjoyed the results.

In his mind, his relationship with animals was as fellow creature, not as human to animal. Anthropomorphized animals, then, were, in effect, Grahame's species. Late in life, he revealed his feelings on the matter:

"As for animals, I wrote about the most familiar and domestic in *The Wind in the Willows* because I felt a duty to them as a friend. Every animal, by instinct, lives according to his nature. Thereby he lives wisely, and betters the tradition of mankind. No animal is ever tempted to belie his nature. No animal, in other words, knows how to tell a lie. Every animal is honest. Every animal is straightforward. Every animal is true—and is, therefore, according to his nature, both beautiful and good. I like most of my friends among the animals more than I like most of my friends among mankind."

Rackham's animals were human-size when depicted with the canary yellow gypsy cart (this is a detail, see color section).

The next rendition of Toad that I beheld was Arthur Rackham's in a copy of *Willows* that my parents gave me for Christmas that year. I had only recently discovered some of Rackham's artwork illustrating other books, so I was fascinated with his interpretation of what, to me, was Disney's Toad.

Illustrating Grahame's book was, for Rackham, a labor of love, and it was his last labor. Rackham took the commission to illustrate the book in 1936 at the age of seventy. The next year, he went to Berkshire in the summer with Elspeth Grahame, the author's widow, to view the banks of the Thames along which Grahame had envisioned his animals living, and in August of that year, he underwent X-ray treatment for a cancer that had just been discovered. By the time he began doing the illustrations in earnest, he was in and out of the hospital. His doctors permitted him to work only an hour a day, and it took him nearly two years to complete the job, slowly dying all the while. He was afflicted with rheumatism in his hand, and by early 1938, he feared he was losing the sight of his right eye. Four of the book's 16 color illustrations were done while he was in bed, and all 12 of the pen-and-ink drawings for the chapter headings.

RACKHAM ART © LIMITED EDITIONS CLUB, INC., SHEPARD ART © ERNEST H. SHEPARD

Rat and Mole, by Shepard, "messing about in boats."

The Rat looked very grave, and stood in deep thought for a minute or two. Then he re-entered the house, strapped a belt around his waist, shoved a brace of pistols into it, took up a stout cudgel that stood in a corner of the hall, and set off for the Wild Wood at a smart pace.

Shepard's Rat, too, was a real individual of almost human dimension (shown here with excerpt of printed page).

Rackham's letters during this time to George Macy, the editorial director of New York's Limited Editions Club, publisher of the new work, reported on the artist's health as well as his progress on the illustrations, and as the months passed, it was clear that Rackham was engaged in a race against time, the question being whether he would live to complete the work.

He did. He reported on April 13, 1939, that he'd finished the last of the art, the line drawings. "I think some of them are as good as I have ever done," he wrote to Macy.

He did not live to see the publication of the book. He died September 6, and his edition of *The Wind in the Willows* finally appeared in early 1940.

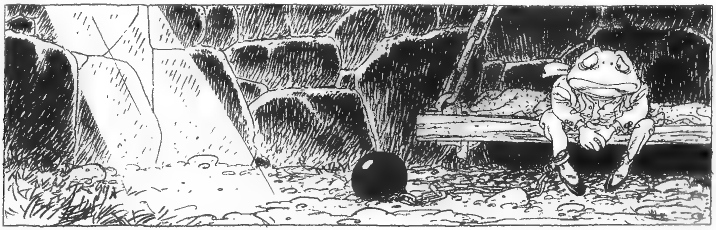
Although it was Rackham's last work, illustrating Grahame's book had been among his fondest wishes. Macy recalled the day in 1936 when, visiting the artist at his studio in Britain, he had first suggested the project among several other possibilities for future illustration:

> Immediately, a wave of emotion crossed his face; he gulped, started to say something, turned his back on me and went to the door for a few minutes. When he came back, he said that he had been trying for many years to persuade an English publisher to let him illustrate Grahame's book, having been forced to turn it down due to the pressure of other work when Grahame invited him to do it nearly 30 years earlier.

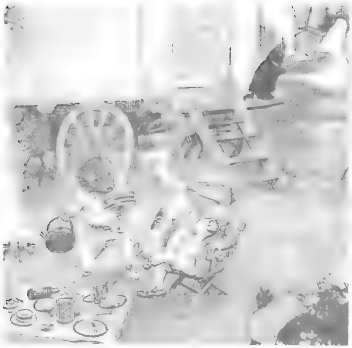
In other words, Rackham had been Grahame's choice from the very first. And when the artist was not available, Grahame permitted the first edition of the book to be published in 1908 with only one illustration, a frontispiece by his friend, an artist and playwright, Graham Robertson.

Rackham's pictures, which often depicted the animals out-of-doors, laminated the work with a patina of Nature. And in that, they were the perfect accompaniment for Grahame's prose.

The initiating impulse for *The Wind in the Willows* had been in stories Grahame told to his seven-year-old son, Alastair. Related sometimes in letters, the stories regaled the youngster with the antic adventurings of Toad. And in Toad's egocentric self-indulgence, his defiance of the dictates of respectability, his assertion of personal, untrammeled freedom to do whatever he wanted to do, we have young Alastair—any child, in fact. The child in Grahame, too. Toad's personality and his adventures embrace and reflect the child-like yearning in us all to achieve wonderful things and to do only what we like to do.



Plessix's Toad seems much like Rackham's. Or Shepard's.



Shepard's animals were somewhat smaller (animal-size) than Rackham's but Toad is still larger than a real toad (this is a detail, see color section).

In creating the book, using his letters to his son as a launching pad, Grahame had written Toad's story first. And then he went back and insinuated into it his haunting descriptions of Rat's life along the river bank—and Mole's, both of them "messing about in boats"—and the ominous mysteriousness of the wild wood and the mystic lyricism of the chapter entitled "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn." These quiet paeans to Nature put Toad's excesses in context: childhood, for all its self-centered extravagances, is part of Nature. As are we, at whatever age.

Rackham's woodland wild with his characteristic burly trees and clumpy knots of grasses give visual expression to the Nature so poetically invoked by Grahame's text. No wonder Grahame had picked this artist over all others when he first contemplated the publication of the book.

There had been four illustrators of the book by the time Rackham's version appeared: Paul Bransom in the 1913 edition; Nancy Barnhart in 1922; Wyndham Payne in 1927, and Ernest Shepard in 1931. Grahame had not been particularly happy with any of those before Shepard's. Bransom and Barnhart had drawn the animals naturalistically, which failed to impart to them their human characteristics. Payne was too cartoony and slick. But in Shepard, the last to illustrate the book while Grahame was alive to witness the results, Toad and his cohorts found an ideal visualizer.

Fresh from illustrating Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*, Shepard was one of the top cartoonists and illustrators of his day. He made a substantial living as an illustrator of books, but he was also a member of the *Punch* Table, a designation reserved for those writers and cartoonists (artists) whose work generated each weekly issue of England's premier humor magazine.

At weekly meetings around this relic, called "the mahogany tree" even though it was made of ordinary deal,

Nature was a friendly, gentle presence in Shepard's artwork, here depicting all the main animal characters (see color section).

Plessix depicts Rat and Mole in rustic River Bank comfort, a decided Rackham resonance (this is a detail, see color section).

the regular contributors gathered for dinner on Wednesdays. (Later, Thursdays, and, since 1925, for lunch rather than dinner.) After an appropriately liquid as well as solid repast, they discussed current events and possibilities for articles and cartoons for the next issue.

Shepard had been published in *Punch* since his debut there in 1907, after trying, vainly, for three years with a regular succession of submissions. By 1921, he had been accepted for publication often enough to warrant his invitation to "join the Table"—i.e., to become a staff member.

When a new edition of *The Wind in the Willows* was contemplated in the early 1930s, Shepard was invited to illustrate it. Ironically, the cartoonist had always believed Grahame's masterpiece was one of those books that should not be illustrated. Not ever. When he was offered the assignment, he took it because he believed he could do better than his predecessors on the book. Grahame, who always had Rackham in mind, wasn't so sure.

Shepard went to Berkshire to visit Grahame, then in his seventies and in frail health, to lobby for acceptance as the new edition's illustrator. Grahame explained that "my animals are not puppets"; other illustrators, he complained, "always make them puppets." Shepard told him what he hoped to do. And Grahame, assenting, finally, said: "I love these little people; be kind to them."

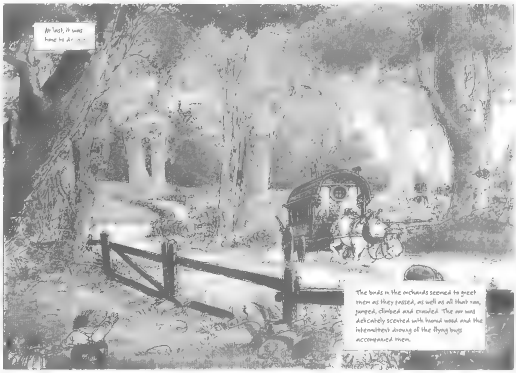
That afternoon, Shepard strolled the banks of the Thames nearby to absorb the milieu of the book and to make sketches. Some time later, he returned to visit Grahame again to show him the results of his work thus far.

"Though critical," Shepard reported, "he seemed pleased and, chuckling, said, 'I'm glad you've made them real.'"

And that, indeed, he had done.

Grahame's biographer, Alison Prince, calls Shepard's style "a perfect match for Grahame's writing." Said Prince: "He obviously understood that animals, for all their smallness of literal scale, were adult beings, going about the business of their lives with as much common sense and blamelessness as they could manage, and so he invested them with immense plausibility."

Others have illustrated *Willows* since Shepard. John Worsley and Jonathan Langley, both too slick, and Eric Kincaid, the best of the three, vaguely like Rackham. Shepard, however, was the last to work with the book's


At last, it was time to
The birds in the orchards seemed to greet them as they passed, as well as all their own, jumped, chirped and chuckled. The air was delicately scented with hawthorn and the intermittent droning of the flying bugs accompanied them.

Plessix's woodland is every bit as knotty as Rackham's (this is a detail, see color section).

Thought so! You're no more a washer-woman than I'm a rat at the opera house!
It's true! I'm the Toad! The very famous, gen-Heman thief of automobiles!
I'm the greatest, the most trou-blesome, the most elegant, the most...
NASTY!
A NASTY TOAD! NOW HORRIBLE!!
Madame!
I'LL SHOW YOU!

A fugitive, Toad hides out with a barge woman, who makes him do her laundry. Plessix creates the comedic central tier with a cartoonist's sensibility—successive panels reveal both action and comedy (this is a detail, see color section).

author as John Tenniel had with Lewis Carroll in illustrating the Alice books. British art historian Bevis Hillier believes Shepard's drawings are "the canonical ones." Admitting that Rackham is a "formidable rival," he goes on to say of Shepard that "nobody else's Mr. Toad could ever be so egregiously conceited, no one else's Mole so velvetly self-effacing."

I've been going about this backwards, you may have noticed. The order of achievement here is, first, Shepard (1931), who gave Grahame's animals human personality, then Rackham (1940), who injected a palpable Nature into the visualization, then Disney (1949), who captured, I believe, the childish exultation in Toad's tale. And now, bringing them altogether, we have Michel Plessix.

Plessix, a 40-something French cartoonist of extraordinary skill, first achieved notice in Europe with a four-volume series called *Julien Boisvert*, a modern-day Tintin. Since 1995, Plessix has been working on *Willows*, completing the project in July 2001.

If you've ever wondered what cartooning can do that other media cannot do as well, you can find the object lesson in Plessix's interpretation of *Willows*. NBM has published this gemlike cartooning masterwork in four 32 9x12-inch page hardcover volumes, each merely $15.95. These books evoke perfectly the pastoral enchantment of Grahame's world. Just as important, Plessix has preserved the feel of the best of Grahame's illustrators, Shepard and Rackham.

In the first volume, Plessix takes us from the riverside meeting of Mole and Rat to their accompanying the irrepressibly changeable Toad on the open road by horse-drawn cart and, finally, to Mole's venturing into the Wild Wood to meet Badger. In this volume, Plessix follows Grahame's story meticulously, abbreviating it necessarily but capturing its mood and spirit exactly. In Volume Two, Plessix elaborates somewhat upon his source, but, again, faithfully maintains the atmosphere of the story.

His delicate lines etch Grahame's "pageant of the riverbank" with loving care. He devotes many spacious panels to setting scenes, evoking mood with breath-taking detail. A canny and caring maneuver: Grahame's tale is largely atmospheric, and to properly enjoy it, we must enter into the warm summer afternoon of its beginning chapters. Here, thanks to Plessix's painstaking attentiveness, we feel the lassitudinal drift of the river, the dreamily slow current that takes us almost imperceptibly out to our adventure.

As Mole and Ratty join Toad on his cart trip, Plessix gives us a half-page illustration of the road through the forest that is rich in ambient detail—birds perched on tree limbs, a squirrel clutching the trunk, butterflies and birds on the wing. Then, no slouch at the storytelling techniques of the medium, he produces a short sequence of tiny panels that focus in close-up on the gentle denizens of the woods—insects, mice and the like; and at night, as the trio gets ready to retire, Plessix conjures up a hauntingly beautiful vault of the deep blue night sky, dotted with stars and crossed with a pillar of gray campfire smoke.

When the gentle Mole wanders through the eerie Wild Wood, Plessix shifts narrative gears and, with rapidly changing perspective and distance from panel to panel, creates a glowering forest, alive with shadowy threat, and paces Mole's growing alarm until it reaches a nearly hysterical pitch. Masterfully done.

He is marvelously adept at telling details. In the Wild Wood, moss grows on the horizontal surfaces of aged tree limbs, toadstools sprout from the trunks, branches twist and vines twine. On the river, he attends carefully to the contours of the antique rowboat and its oarlocks and other archaic fittings.

In the Badger's subterranean burrow in Volume Two, Plessix creates a warm and tidy kitchen hearth as well as, a few pages later, a vast cavern at the other end of the Badger's digs. The snow scenes outside are starkly white, but the expanse of colorlessness is often broken by such tiny details as the dried stalk of an occasional weed, piercing up through the frozen crust like a minuscule skeleton.

Volume Three covers chapters 7-9 of the original opus—the chapters in which the incorrigible egotist, Toad, escapes from prison and wends his event-laden way back home towards that ancestral pile, Toad Hall.

In interpreting Chapter 7 of the book, Plessix arrives at another pinnacle of achievement. This is the mystic chapter entitled "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn," and when I read the book first (just on the cusp of adolescence, tovarich), it seemed to me the most mysterious of the book's chapters—so mysterious as to be almost entirely extraneous to what appeared to be the book's over-arching plot about Toad and Ratty and Mole. But Plessix makes it all intelligible and reveals it to be at the heart of the book.

I had forgotten how much of the book is a dreamy evocation of the riverbank—of the flora and fauna that line the eddying flow. In his pictures, Plessix captures this feeling, showing us Ratty and Mole adrift in their boat, seemingly floating on airy nothing because the cartoonist depicts the river simply by sketching its banks, leaving out any indications of the current that doubtless animates its surface in actuality. His vision of the Piper—his explanation of this haunting phenomenon—can take place only in cartooning (or in a medium so similar as to be virtually imitative).

And, finally, playing with a single word, Plessix explicates the book's title, acknowledging that this key chapter incorporates "the music of the wind in the willows." Beautifully done.

Volume Four sees Toad and his friends reclaim Toad Hall, and Plessix creates here all the frantic excitement of Disney's animated action, deploying the sequential panels of the art form with an expert flair to achieve both dramatic and comedic ends. And he ends on the same un-Grahame-like note as Disney did—with Toad at the controls of his brand new aeroplane, spiraling above Toad Hall in a paroxysm of excitement.

The afternoon sun was getting low. Rat was reciting poems to himself while daydreaming as for Mole, he was very full of lunch and of the delightful day.
"Spring all around
Fills us anew
The world of sound
Makes me hungry, too
The frog croaks
While the sparrow jokes
I'm ready to dine
With a fine glass of wine."
Burr

Leaving out any indication of watery waves, Plessix creates a blissful, placid surface along which Rat and Mole paddle contentedly, without serious disruption (this is a detail, see color section).

Sherpard gave Grahame's animals their humanity and comic gloss, and Rackham gave the tale its gnarly natural texture. Plessix's pictures evoke both once again with individually realized animal personalities and knotty renderings in pen-and-ink delicately colored with aquarelle. And yet, there is a distinctive Plessix presence, too.

His is the cartoonist's presence, and it conjures up the Disney version. Plessix laces his narrative with sight gags,

[continued on page 80]

A CONCISE HISTORY OF DISNEY

1 – Enter the MOUSE

By January 13, 1930, when the first *Mickey Mouse* daily strip appeared in the *New York Mirror*, Walt Disney's most famous character was already a national figure. The Mouse had starred in 16 hugely successful animated shorts, and obviously the time was ripe to make the great leap from celluloid to paper. Back in the summer of 1929 Walt had worked out a few gags and asked Ub Iwerks—Mickey's "other father"—to sketch them out in strip form. That winter, King Features Syndicate proposed to Walt that there should be a *Mickey Mouse* strip, which they would syndicate internationally. Very soon, three weeks' worth of *Mickey Mouse by Ub Iwerks* (inked by former newspaper cartoonist Win Smith) were ready for release.

Although in his comic-strip incarnation Mickey Mouse inherited various features from earlier humorous comic characters, the one that most influenced him was perhaps Felix the Cat, created for the Pat Sullivan animation Studio by Otto Messmer, who was also drawing him for the comic pages. The early strips saw Mickey's homemade airplane go out of control and fly to a mysterious island populated by cannibals and wild beasts. Consisting of a storyline that was essentially a string of gags, they drew inspiration from the Mouse's first-produced short, *Plane Crazy* (1928), as well as from *Jungle Rhythm* (1929).

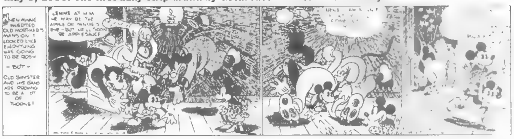
While the first few dailies were being released, Ub Iwerks left Disney to form his own animation studio, and the 42-year-old Win Smith took over the pencilling as well as the inking. In March 1930, King Features asked Disney to turn the newspaper *Mickey Mouse* into a full-fledged continuity strip, and on April 4 the "Death Valley" story started, featuring what would be the regular cast of the strip for years: besides Mickey and his girlfriend Minnie (who had appeared as early as January 18), there were Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar, as well as such evil-doers as Sylvester Shyster and Peg-Leg Pete. The latter (also known

by Alberto Becattini

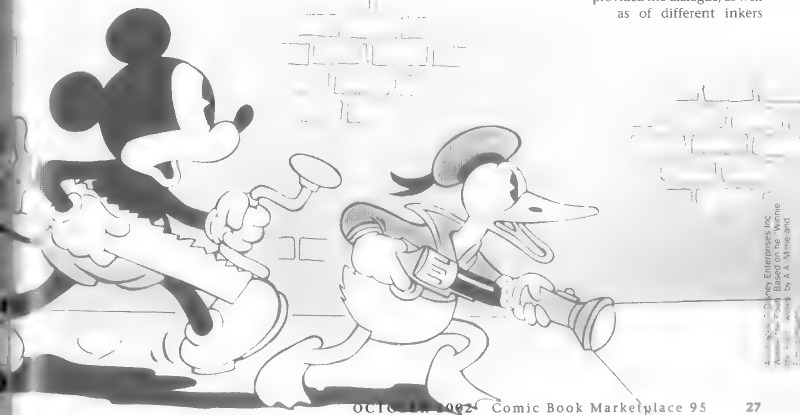
NEWSPAPER STRIPS

as Black Pete and Big Bad Pete) would soon become Mickey's archenemy. Later on, other staples would join in, such as Pluto the pup (1931), Mickey's "nephews" Morty and Ferdie Fieldmouse (1932) and Goofy (initially known as Dippy Dawg, (1933)).

May 5, 1930: The first daily strip drawn by Gottfredson. Writer: Walt Disney.



In April 1930, Smith left the studio after quarrelling with Walt (who wanted him to take over the scripts as well) and was replaced by a talented 25-year-old in-betweener named Floyd Gottfredson. Hired by Walt as a "temporary replacement," Gottfredson ended up working on the strip for nearly 46 years, giving the newspaper Mickey Mouse a personality of his own, markedly different from his screen persona. Gottfredson's first strip appeared on May 5, 1930, and two weeks later the artist from Utah was also writing it. Walt continued to supervise his work for a while, but then, apart from occasional comments, he had nothing more to do with the comic-strip production which bore his name. On January 10, 1932, a color *Mickey Mouse* Sunday page was added. The first one was written and drawn by animation story-man Earl Duvall, with Gottfredson taking over the following week. Although it alternated gags with continuities until 1944, the Sunday *Mickey Mouse* was less adventure-oriented than its daily counterpart, where Gottfredson was able to create long and complex yarns, with Mickey as a sort of man for all seasons, a character that could take any role that required action. With the help of various writers (Webb Smith, Ted Osborne, Merrill DeMaris, Bob Karp, Dick Shaw) who provided the dialogue, as well as of different inkers



Disney Enterprises, Inc.
Based on the "Winnie
by A.A. Milne and

PREPARATIONS ARE BEING COMPLETED FOR SHOOTING THE FIRST SCENES OF 'ROBINSON CRUSOE.'
MAKE SURE THAT STUFF ON THE RAFT CAN'T SLIP!
AND WATCH THOSE REFLECTORS! DON'T LOSE ANY LIGHT!
IT'S ALL TIGHT CHIEF!
OKAY, CHIEF!

December 21, 1938: The movie within the comic strip begins, from "Mickey Mouse and Robinson Crusoe," with double-tone effects. Writer: Merrill DeMaris; Penciller: Floyd Gottfredson; Inker: Ted Thwaites; Letterer: Bill Wright.

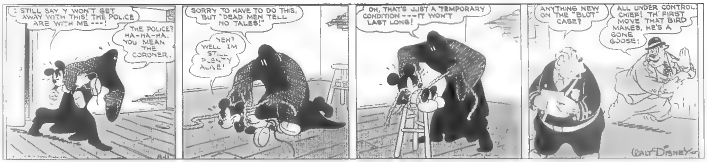
June 2, 1934: A classic Mickey strip from "The Bat Bandit of Inferno Gulch." Writer: Ted Osborne; Penciller: Floyd Gottfredson; Inker and Letterer: Ted Thwaites.

(Hardie Gramatky, Earl Duvall, Al Taliaferro, Ted Thwaites, Bill Wright and Dick Moores), Gottfredson created a long string of memorable stories which drew inspiration from different sources: "Mickey Mouse the Detective" (1933-34) was patently inspired by the hard-boiled thrillers of writers such as Dashiell Hammett; "Pluto the Racer" (1934-35) reflected the contemporary craze for dog-racing; "Mickey Mouse Runs His Own Newspaper" (1935) was strongly reminiscent of "underworld" movies like *Little Caesar* (1930) or *Scarface* (1932); "Mickey Mouse on Sky Island" (1936-37) introduced Professor Einmug and dealt with the development and possible abuse of atomic power; and "Mickey Mouse and His Royal Highness" (1937-38) was a blatant parody of the popular movie *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1937).

Another great source of inspiration was, of course, to be found in the animated *Mickey Mouse* shorts, with the strip version sometimes appearing long before the animated one. Such Sunday-page serials as "Mickey's Kangaroo" (1935), "Mickey's Rival" (1936) and "The Brave Little Tailor" (1938) were based more or less directly on animated cartoons. More often, Gottfredson would take the basic plot of a short and elaborate on it, turning it into a remarkably different story. This happened, for instance, with "Mickey Mouse and the Seven Ghosts" (1936), which was an elaborated version of *Lonesome Ghosts* (1937), and with "Mickey Mouse and Robinson Crusoe" (1938-39), which was very loosely based on *Mickey's Man Friday* (1935).

Although, as we have noted, the comic-strip Mickey was markedly different from his screen counterpart, his visual appearance was determined to a great extent by what was happening in the animated shorts, and Gottfredson modified his looks accordingly when requested to. In

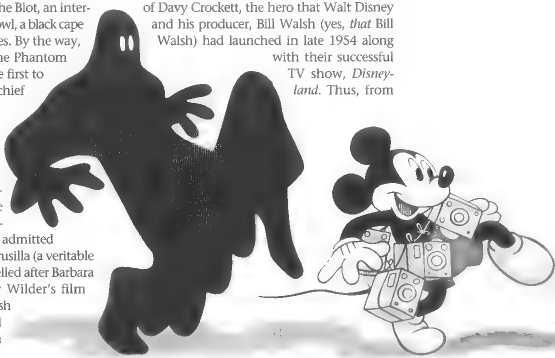
THIS SUSPENSE IS TERRIBLE! DO YOU THINK WE BETTER GO HOME?
NO! AFTER ALL, THE BANDIT MAY BE BLUFFIN' AN' I'M GOIN' TO SEE IT THROUGH!
WHO THE HECK'S THIS COMIN'! STAND BACK, MINNIE, 'TIL I SEE WHO IT IS!
IT'S ALL RIGHT— IT'S DON JOLLIO!
I GO TO TOWN TO GET SHEEPMENT OF MONEY FOR CATTLE I SOLD, BUT FIRST I CALL ON SENOR MORTIMER FOR ASK FOR GUARD TO GO WEETH ME!
OH, YOU WANTA TAKE ONE OF UNCLE MORTIMER'S COWBOYS!
NO, NOT A COWBOY! I TAKE WEETH ME ZE SMARTEST LEETLE FELLOW ON ZE RANCH — SENOR MEECHEY MOUSE!


I STILL SAY Y WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS, TH' POLICE ARE WITH ME---
THE POLICE? HA-HA-HA, YOU MEAN THE CORONER.
SORRY TO HAVE TO DO THIS, BUT DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES!
HEH! WELL I'M ST-TEN'LY ALIVE!
OH, THAT'S JUST A TEMPORARY CONDITION---IT WON'T LAST LONG!
ANYTHING NEW ON THE "BLOT" CASE?
ALL UNDER CONTROL, CHIEF! TH' FIRST MOVE THAT BIRD MAKES, HE'S A GONE GOOSE!
WALT DISNEY

August 11, 1939: Mickey is caught by the sadistic Blot. The last panel features police chief Mr. O'Hara and his assistant, Mr. Casey. Writer: Merrill DeMaris; Penciller: Floyd Gottfredson; Inker and Letterer: Ted Thwaites.

1938, for instance, the pie-cut eyes became more naturalistic by acquiring pupils; by 1943, the Mouse was no longer wearing shorts but trousers; and there was even a time (from 1944-46) when Mickey's tail disappeared. The strip also reflected the historical events that took place in the USA and the whole world. Mickey and his friends progressively moved from a rural to an urban background (sometimes referred to as "Hometown" or "Mouseville"), making ends meet during the Depression years and contributing to the national cause during WWII (the Mouse even piloted a super-secret airplane, dropping bombs on several German cities). It has often been said that the "classic" Mickey of the 1930s was a perfect representation of the principles that inspired Roosevelt's New Deal. The Mouse was, as it were, a positive force: faced by adversity, his best weapon was his self-confidence. By the late thirties, though, Mickey had lost part of his previously unshakable optimism, and the atmosphere of the strip got darker, its overall somberness being embodied by such memorable villains as the Blot, an international spy who wore a black cowl, a black cape as well as black gloves and shoes. By the way, the "Mickey Mouse Outwits the Phantom Blot" (1939) continuity was the first to feature Mr. O'Hara, the police chief in Mickey's town.

When Bill Walsh took over the scripts in June 1943, he established his own, particular style, mixing science-fiction, mystery, horror, and tongue-in-cheek humor. In "Mickey Mouse in the House of Mystery" (1944-45), death was for the first time admitted as a reality, when the blonde Drusilla (a veritable "femme fatale," probably modelled after Barbara Stanwyck's character in Billy Wilder's film *Double Indemnity*) and her dwarfish servant Jeremiah were burned alive in a fire. In 1947, Walsh and Gottfredson (who was now pencilling, inking and lettering the strip) created another memorable character, Eega Beeva, a most peculiar being who came from the center of the Earth as well as from the future (2447, to be precise). Endowed with strange powers, the idiosyncratic Eega soon became Mickey's sidekick, accompanying the Mouse through several fantastic adventures until early 1950, when its creators decided to send him back home—ostensibly because he was homesick, but in fact because there was a very real danger that his charismatic presence might outshine Mickey's own. Walsh and Gottfredson continued to create more outstanding continuities (a couple of them starring Goofy, who had been unfairly neglected during the Eega Beeva years) until mid-1955, when King Features asked Disney to adopt a regular gag-a-day form. They were apparently concerned that TV serials were eroding public interest in adventurous comic strips. Ironically enough, Mickey's last daily continuity co-starred Li'l Davy, a diminutive, cartoony version of Davy Crockett, the hero that Walt Disney and his producer, Bill Walsh (yes, *that* Bill Walsh) had launched in late 1954 along with their successful TV show, *Disneyland*. Thus, from



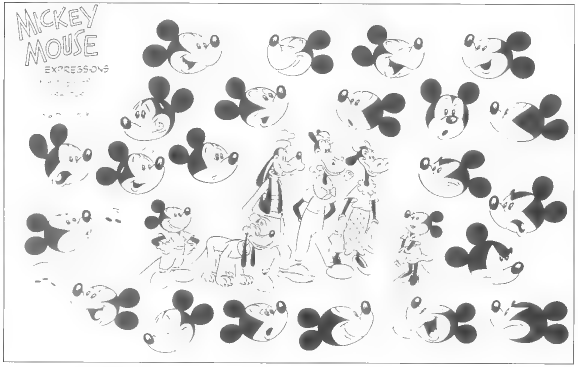
QUICK, MINNIE! UNCLE MAX . . . THIS WAY . . . !
MY FORMULAS! THEY'RE ALL IN THERE!
DRUSILLA . . . ! DON'T GO BACK IN THERE!
MISSY! MISSY! WAIT FOR JEREMIAH!
BWOOM!
POOR DRUSILLA!
BRILLIANT.. AND CRUEL! SHE CAME FROM THE PAST . . . NOW SHE'S GONE BACK TO T . . . !

January 27, 1945: The death of Drusilla and Jeremiah. Writer: Bill Walsh; Penciller: Floyd Gottfredson; Inker and Letterer: Dick Moores.

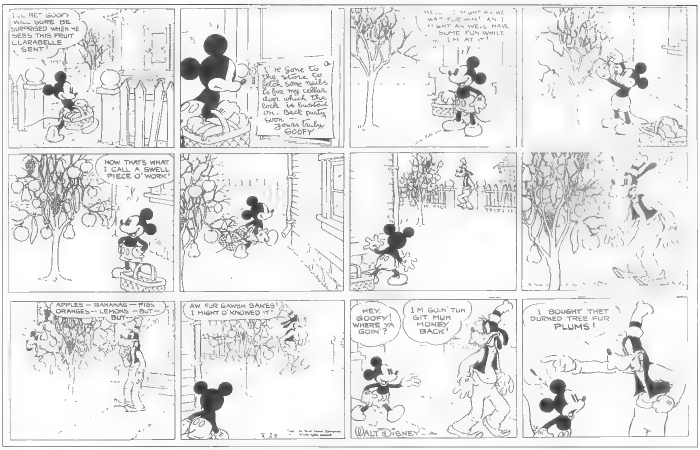
then on there was no structural difference between the *Mickey Mouse* dailies and the Sundays, which had consisted of gags since 1944. A talented Spanish-born artist, Manuel Gonzales, had been drawing them since 1938, continuing until his retirement in 1981, although Bill Wright replaced him during the War years, Floyd Gottfredson periodically lent him a hand to let him go on vacation and Tony Strobl sometimes filled in as a penciller during the late 1970s.

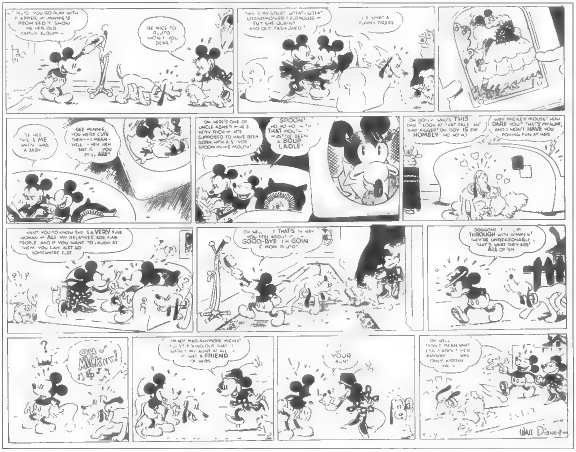
As for the dailies, the adventurous Mickey was gone for keeps, having gotten into a rut of domestic/urban skirmishes with his "surviving nephew" Morty (his twin brother Ferdie had disappeared in December 1943), Minnie and Goofy, provided by Walsh and later by Roy Williams, Del Connell, and Floyd Norman. Gottfredson, though, managed to keep the artistic quality of the strip intact until his retirement on October 1, 1975. After that, the uninspired Román Arámbula took over the art, and the strip began declining for good. Nor were such good inkers as Bill Wright, Bill Langley, Jules Coenen or Larry Mayer able to make Arámbula's drawing any better from 1983-89. There was a brief period in 1981-82, though, when the Sunday page was excellently drawn by the Dutch artist Daan Jippes, and a month during Fall 1982 (during a strike at the Disney Studio) when Arámbula was replaced on the dailies by the more capable Carson Van Osten and Steve Steere.

In January 1990, the *Mickey Mouse* daily became a "semi-continuing strip," meaning that brief continuities alternated with gags (most of the latter being reprints from the 1980s, written by



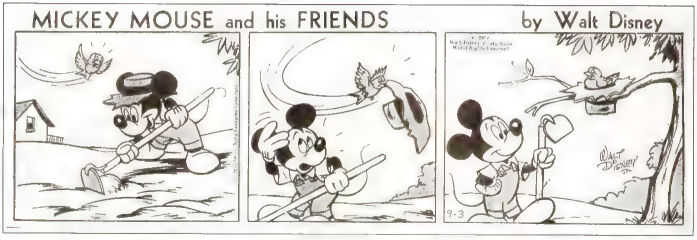
1959 Mickey Mouse model sheet by Floyd Gottfredson.


HOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A SWELL PIECE O' WORK!
APPLES — BANANAS — PEARS — ORANGES — LEMONS — BUT NO PLUMS!
AW FUR GAWSH SAKES! I MIGHT O' KNOWED IT
HEY, GOOFY! WHERE YA GOIN'?
I'M GOIN TUH GIT MUH MONEY BACK!
I BOUGHT THEM DURNED TREE FUR PLUMS!
WALT DISNEY


SO YOU SOLD HIM SOME TREES, EH? WHAT'S FROM HERE? SHOW ME HER OLD FAMILY ALBUM!
SHE WANTS TO SEE MY FAMILY ALBUM!
SEE MINNIE YOU WERE CUTE WHEN—I MEAN— YOU WERE VERY SEXY AS A BABY!
OH HERE'S ONE OF UNCLE ASBESTOS AS A YOUNG MAN—HE SURPRISED HIS FAMILY BY SUDDENLY APPEARING FROM THE SPOUT OF A TEAPOT!
SPOOOON!
OH GOSH! WHAT'S THIS DOING IN MY FAMILY ALBUM?
WHY MICKEY MOUSE! HOW DARE YOU! I HAVE NO FAMILY!
WHAT YOU TO KNOW SHE IS A VERY FINE WOMAN—ALL MY RELATIVES ARE FINE WOMEN—I WANT YOU TO MARRY HER, YOU CAN JUST ADD SOME WHITE FUR!
OH WELL—I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MARRY HER!
OH GOSH! I—I MEAN—I'M GOIN' RIGHT IN!
SPOOOON!!! I'M THROUGH WITH YOU!! WE'RE UNDERSTANDABLY THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY!
ALL OF 'EM!
SPOOOON!
OH WELL—I GUESS I HEE HAWED SOMEWHERE!
YOUR MOM!
Walt Disney

February 28, 1937. Writer: Ted Osborne; Penciller: Floyd Gottfredson; Inker: Al Taliaferro; Letterer: Ted Thwaites

May 29, 1932: Early Sunday page featuring Minnie Mouse's family album. Writer and Penciller: Floyd Gottfredson; Inker and Letterer: Al Taliaferro.

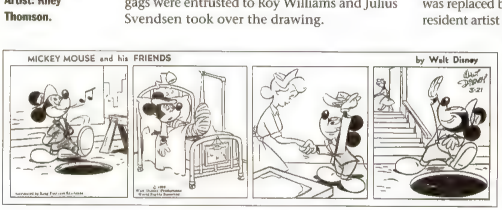


September 3, 1958. Writer: Milt Banta; Artist: Ken Hultgren.

Floyd Norman or Del Connell). Alex Howell was the main writer/artist, although during the early-to-mid-1990s some continuities were drawn by T. Lewis and Rick Hoover. In 1994, the latter artist drew new, abridged versions of such classic comic-strip stories as "Mickey Mouse in Blaggard Castle" (1932), "Mickey Mouse the Mail Pilot" (1933) and "Mickey Mouse Outwits the Phantom Blot" (1939), on scripts adapted by such freelance writers as Colette Bezio, Mike Fry and Gary Whitney. Today the strip, which runs in a small number of US papers, apparently consists of reprints only.

To complete this chapter on Mickey, it must be added that between September 1, 1958, and March 17, 1962, there was *another* daily strip starring the Mouse. This was *Mickey Mouse and His Friends*, a gag-a-day strip which was just the same as its better-known counterpart, except that there were no dialogue balloons or captions. Probably thought to be more easily sold abroad, as there was no need for translations, it was initially written by animation story-man Milt Banta and drawn by animator Ken Hultgren. Starting in February 1959, Manuel Gonzales and Riley Thomson took turns on the art. Three months later, the gags were entrusted to Roy Williams and Julius Svendsen took over the drawing.

March 21, 1959. Writer: Milt Banta; Artist: Riley Thomson.

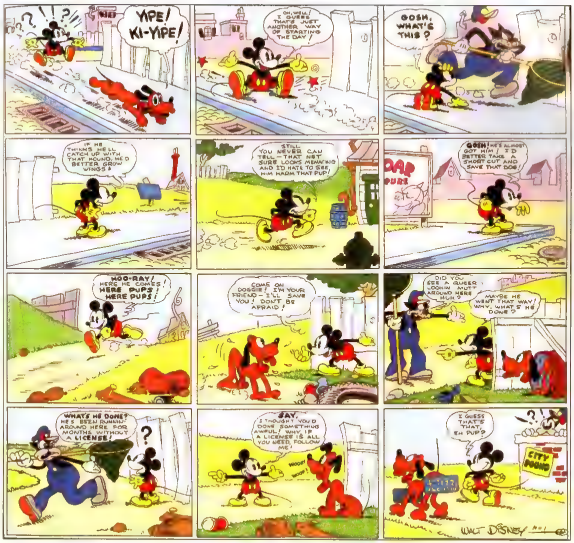


2 – Sunday Symphonies

When the *Mickey Mouse* Sunday page made its début on January 10, 1932, *Silly Symphony* was the natural choice as its "topper." The *Silly Symphony* animated series had started in 1929 with *The Skeleton Dance*, and unlike the *Mickey Mouse* cartoon series it did not feature regular characters. Each short presented a self-contained story with its own cast, revolving around a musical theme.

Occupying the upper third of the Disney weekly page, *Silly Symphony* did not—initially, at least—adapt any of the screen shorts. Rather, it introduced an unnamed newborn bug (later christened Bucky Bug through a contest among readers), whose adventures were loosely derived from a 1932 cartoon, *Bugs in Love*. Earl Duvall, who had probably written the story for the above-mentioned short, created Bucky and developed his microcosm. The bug lived in Junkville, a tiny insect town made of cracked plates and old cups and cans, and was soon joined by his friend Bo Bug and by his fiancée June Bug(g), daughter of Junkville's Mayor Bug(g).

In April 1933, Duvall left the Disney Studio and was replaced by Al Taliaferro, who would be the resident artist on the *Silly Symphony* page for the next six years. Bucky's adventures ended on March 4, 1934, with his marriage to June, and the following week straightforward adaptations of the animated *Silly Symphony* shorts began to appear, written by Ted Osborne and Merril DeMaris. Between then and April 16, 1939, there were 11 continuities based on the same number of shorts, from "Birds of a Feather" to


YIPE!
KI-YIPE!
OOSH, WHAT'S THIS?
DAD PUPS
GOSH! HE'S ALMOST CAUGHT UP WITH THAT HOUND, HE'D BETTER TAKE A SHORT CUT AND SAVE THAT DOG!
HOO-RAY! HERE PUPS! HERE PUPS!
COME ON DOGGIE! I'LL BE YOUR FRIEND! I'LL SAVE YOU! DON'T BE AFRAID!
DID YOU SEE A QUEER LOOKIN' DUCK AROUND HERE ANYWHERE?
HMPH! MAYBE HE WENT THAT WAY! WHY, WHAT'S HE DONE?
WHAT'S HE DONE? HE'S RESIN RUNNIN' AROUND HERE FOR MONTHS WITHOUT A LICENSE!
SAY, I THOUGHT YOU'D DONE SOMETHING WRONG IF A HUNDRED MILES YOU WERE FOLLOWED AT!
I GUESS THAT'S THAT, EH PUP?
CITY POUND
WALT DISNEY

January 10, 1932: The first Mickey Mouse Sunday page, featuring an early version of Pluto. Writer and Artist: Earl Duvall.

"The Ugly Duckling." Other continuities, like "The Further Adventures of the Three Little Pigs" (1936), were also derived from shorts but had divergent plots. There were also original stories, like "The Boarding School Mystery" (1934-35), which used characters that had first appeared in the animated cartoons.

"The Little Red Hen" (an adaptation of the 1934 short, *The Wise Little Hen*) marked the comic-strip début of Donald Duck on September 16, 1934. Needless to say, the irascible Donald was destined to fame both in comics and animated cartoons. In fact, after featuring in the *Mickey Mouse* strips and pages for a couple of years, he would star in the *Silly Symphony* page from August 1936 until December 1937. On October 17, 1937, he was joined by his three pesky nephews, Huey, Dewey and Louie, created by Al Taliaferro and developed by the Disney Animation Studio for the 1938 short, *Donald's Nephews*.

When Disney produced his first feature cartoon, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, its 20-week adaptation ran in the *Silly Symphony* page starting in December 1937, including scenes that had been excised from the movie. The *Pinocchio* comic version was likewise serialized between December 1939 (anticipating the film's release by six weeks) and April 1940. Both these adaptations were written by Merril DeMaris and beautifully drawn by publicity artist Hank Porter along with his assistant, Bob Grant. The latter became the resident artist on the weekly series by November 1939, when he took over from Taliaferro on a string of *Pluto the Pup* pages written by Hubie Karp. Karp and Grant then concentrated their efforts on *Little Hiawatha*, a diminutive Amerindian boy who had starred in a 1937 *Silly Symphony* cartoon. Hiawatha's gag-a-week adventures (most of which had no dialogues) ran from November 10, 1940, until July 12, 1942, followed by a 12-week adap-

Snow White
and the Seven Dwarfs
by WALT DISNEY
ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A LOVELY LITTLE PRINCESS NAMED SNOW WHITE.....
.....WHO WAS FORCED TO DRESS IN RAGS AND DO MENIAL WORK AROUND THE CASTLE.....
.....BY HER WICKED STEP-MOTHER, THE QUEEN!
I WON'T ALWAYS HAVE TO WORK SO HARD! SOME DAY A PRINCE WILL COME FOR ME!
TO BE CONTINUED...

December 12, 1937: The first page of the Snow White comic-strip adaptation. Writer: Merrill DeMaris; Artists: Hank Porter and Bob Grant; Letterer: Ted Thwaites.

tation of *Bambi*, likewise drawn by Grant, with inking by animation layout man Karl Karpé. By then, the "Silly Symphony" logo had disappeared, so that the page was known as *Sunday Color Comics*.

On October 11, 1942, a new regular character was introduced—the Brazilian parrot José (Joe) Carioca, who was to grace the big screen in *Saludos Amigos* (1943), *The Three Caballeros* (1945) and *Melody Time* (1948). His misadventures, often including encounters or travels with wealthy and/or buxom *chicas*, lasted a year and were written by Hubie Karp and initially drawn by Grant and Karpé. When Grant was drafted in early 1943, the moonlighting animator Paul Murry took over the pencilling, with inks and lettering provided by Dick Moores. Murry and Moores then drew the weekly pages devoted to the Mexican rooster Panchito (who also starred in *The Three Caballeros*), whom writer Bill Walsh made less exuberant than he looked on the screen. Panchito appeared for the last time on October 7, 1945, and that marked the official end of the *Silly Symphony/Sunday Color Comics* page, although two further 16-week continuities based on the animated features *Cinderella* (1950) and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) were to be serialized in the Sunday papers, drawn by Manuel Gonzales and

October 22, 1944: Panchito and his horse, Senor Martinez. Writer: Bill Walsh; Penciller: Paul Murry; Inker and Letterer: Dick Moores.

HOW'S YOUR UNCLE SINCE HIS CLOTHIN' STORE WAS ROBBED?
OH, BOY! IS HE UPSET! THE NIGHT YOU WERE THERE WAS ONLY THE FIRST ROBBERY! SINCE THEN, THE STORE'S BEEN ROBBED MOST EVRY NIGHT!
GOSH! THAT'S QUEER! AN' NEVER ANY MONEY TAKEN — JUST CLOTHES?
NUTHIN' BUT CLOTHES! UNCLE AMOS IS NEARLY CRAZY!
I PHONED FOR A DETECTIVE! HE SHOULD BE HERE NOW!
OH-BOY-OH-BOY! A REAL DETECTIVE! I'LL HELP 'IM!
INSPECTOR SKILLEM: PRUM, HEADQUARTERS! DON'T MOVE ANYTHING! WHERE'S THE BOOB?
IT'S NOT A MURDER! A THIEF HAS BEEN STEALING CLOTHES FROM THE STORE!
WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE CLOTHES WERE STOLEN? QUICK, NOW!
F' GOSH SAKES! Y' DON'T THINK I DID IT, DO Y'?
OH! SO YUH WON'T TALK, EH?
GOOD HEAVENS, INSPECTOR! MICKEY DIDN'T DO IT! I SAW THE THIEF ONCE!
OH, YEAH? WHO ARE YOU? QUICK NOW!
WHY, YOU — YOU — I'M ZOUP! THE MAN WHO SENT FOR YOU!
AHA! JUST AS I THOUGHT! I NEVER FORGET A FACE!
AN OPEN 'N' SHUT CASE! DON'T GIVE IT ANOTHER THOUGHT!
CERTAINLY NOT! GOOD-BYE!
WHAT A GUY!
NONE O' YER TRICKS, MUGG! COME CLEAN! QUICK, NOW!
THAT'S DONALD, C'MON!
I'VE GOT 'M THUM RAT!
DONALD! HE WAS ONLY TRYING ON A SUIT! IT'S MY BEST CUSTOMER!
— YOUR BEST FORMER CUSTOMER!
OH-BOY-OH-BOY! AM I IN DUTCH WITH UNCLE AMOS?
Y' KNOW WHAT, DONALD? LET'S YOU AN' ME STICK TO IT 'TIL WE FIND THE REAL THIEF!
WALT DISNEY

Dick Moores and written by Frank Reilly, who had become the manager/administrator of Disney's Comic Strip Department in January 1946.

February 24, 1935: Mickey and Donald co-star in "The Stolen Coats." Writer: Ted Osborne; Penciller: Floyd Gottfredson; Inker and Letterer: Ted Thwaites.

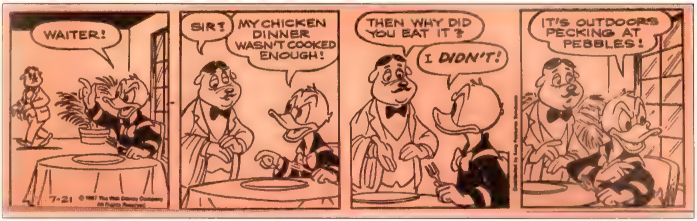
3 – The Duck Star

By 1937, Donald Duck's popularity was booming. The short *Don Donald*, released in January, was the first where the Duck starred without any of the rest of the regular gang. Later that year, the 32-year-old Al Taliaferro, who had drawn all of the Donald Duck pages in the *Silly Symphony* series, suggested to Roy O. Disney that there should be a daily *Donald Duck* series. Roy showed little interest, but Taliaferro insisted, writing and drawing three weeks' worth of strips. Roy showed them to King Features, who liked the idea but found the gags inadequate. A second attempt, with writer Merrill DeMaris writing more tryout strips, likewise failed. Then other story-men, including Homer Brightman, Roy Williams and Bob Karp, started submitting gags of their own, and it was Karp who eventually became the regular writer on the *Donald Duck* daily strip, which started on February 7, 1938.

Although they rarely met (Karp worked at home and Taliaferro at the Studio), the two men made a good creative team, which lasted until Taliaferro's death in February 1969. Although at times there were strings of gags which formed loose continuities, sometimes based on animated shorts (for instance, the two-week sequence in May 1938 in which the gluttonous Gus Goose decided he would stay at cousin Donald's house and empty his fridge, as he also did in the 1939 cartoon short,

February 22, 1987: Tony Strobl's pencils, and Daan Jippes' finished art and lettering. Writer: Bob Foster.

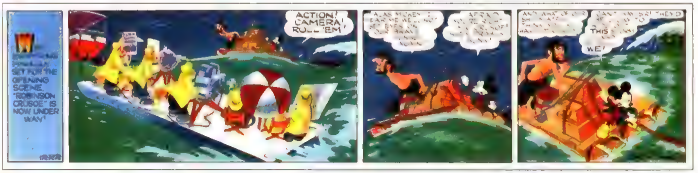
Walt Disney's
DONALD DUCK
GIVE ME YOUR SUPER STEEL BELTED TRIPLE-THREAD ROAD CLUTCHERS!
TIRES
TIRE SALE
WE PUT THE NEW TIRES ON YOUR CAR, MR. DUCK! YOU'RE ALL SET!
I'M GLAD THAT'S DONE!
WAK!
BLAM!
HEY! LOOK! THIS CHEAP TIRE HAS A PUNCTURE!
OUR WARRANTY DOESN'T COVER DRIVING OVER NAILS, MR. DUCK!
NAILS?
WHAT ABOUT MOSQUITOS?

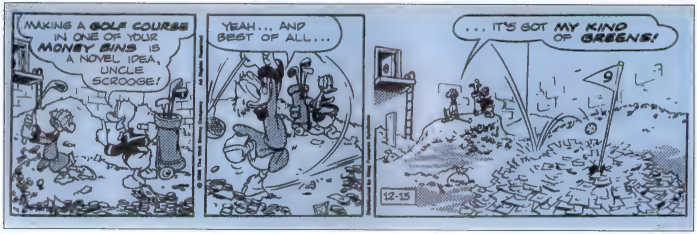


Donald's Cousin Gus). During the years, other characters joined the regular cast, including Donald's huge St. Bernard dog, Bolivar (1938), his girlfriend Daisy Duck (1940), as well as Grandma Duck (1943), Uncle Scrooge (1951) and Professor Ludwig Von Drake (1961).

At Taliaferro's insistence, a *Donald Duck* Sunday page appeared on December 10, 1939, and from then on the artist had to rely on the help of inkers, including Bill Wright, Karl Karpé, Dick Moores and George Waiss. Taliaferro was at his best from 1946-65, when he was again pencilling and inking the strip himself. Then the artist's health began to decline, and until his untimely death he was assisted and sometimes replaced by other staffers, including Al Hubbard, Kay Wright, Ellis Eringer, and Frank Grundeen. A former animator, Grundeen took over the strip in 1969 and continued drawing it until his retirement in 1976, when the art chores were assigned to the mediocre Frank Smith. With very few exceptions (Carl Barks provided a few gags in 1939-40, while working in the Animation Story Department), Bob Karp wrote the strip until his death in 1975, and was succeeded by Greg Crosby and then by Bob Foster. When Frank Smith died in 1986, several draftsmen alternated on the strip, with some nice art provided by Jim Franzen, Ulrich Schröder, Daan Jippes, Jorgen Klubien, Tony Strobl and Bill Langley. Veteran animation lay-

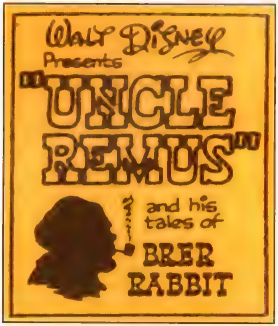
July 21, 1987. Writer: Bob Foster. Penciller: Pete Alvarado; Inker and Letterer: Larry Mayer.




MAKING A GOLF COURSE IN ONE OF YOUR MONEY BINS IS A NOVEL IDEA, UNCLE SCROOGE!
YEAH... AND BEST OF ALL...
... IT'S GOT MY KIND OF GREENS!
12-13

December 13, 1986: Daan Jippes' pencils and the final version of the same strip, lettered by Jippes and inked by Jules Coenen. Writer: Bob Foster.

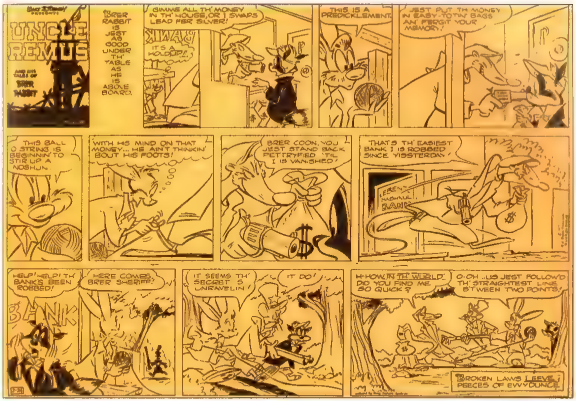
out/background artist Pete Alvarado assumed the art chores in April 1987 and continued until January 1990, when the production of the *Donald Duck* strip was first shared by the Disney Studio and King Features. Don Ferguson and a number of KFS staffers wrote it and Larry Knighton drew it until the mid-1990s, when it went into reprints.



4 — The Smart Rabbit

The Disney feature *Song of the South*, partly animated and part live-action, was released in November 1946. It was based on Joel Chandler Harris's moralistic *Uncle Remus* stories, published between 1880 and 1910. It had been customary for the Disney features to be "previewed" in the comics a few weeks before the movie's premiere, but the *Uncle Remus and His Tales of Brer Rabbit* Sunday page started on October 14, 1945—over a year before the movie's release. First written by Bill Walsh and drawn by Paul Murry (who had been an animator on *Song of the South*) with Dick Moores and Bill Wright inking, the weekly page start-

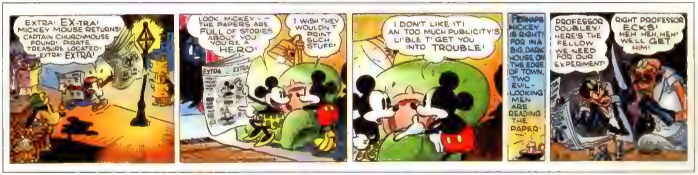
September 4, 1949. Writer: George Stallings; Artist and Letterer: Dick Moores.


UNCLE REMUS
SHE'S JUST AS GOOD LOOKIN' AS HE IS ABOUT DANCE.
GIMME ALL THE MONEY IN THE HOUSE OR I SWAPS LEAD FER SILVER!
IT'S A HOLDUP!
THIS IS A PREDICKLEMENT
I JEST PUT THE MONEY IN EASY-TO-TOTE BAGS AN' FROST YOUR MEMORY!
THIS BALL O STRING IS BEGINNIN TO STIR UP A NOSHUN
WITH HIS MIND ON THAT MONEY HE DON'T THUNK 'BOUT HIS FOOTS
BRER COON, YOU JEST STAND THE PETTIFIED I IS VANISHED!
THAT'S TH EASIEST BANK I IS ROBBED SINCE YISTERDAY
HELP! HELP! TH BANKS BEEN ROBBED!
HERE COMES BRER SHERIFF!
IT SEEMS TH SECRET IS UNRAVELLIN!
IT DO!
H-HOW IN TH WORLD DID YOU FIND ME SO QUICK?
O-OH ...IUS JEST FOLLOWD TH STRAIGHTEST LINE BTWEEN TWO POINTS!
BROKEN LAWS LEAVE PIECES OF EVVYDUNCE

February 24, 1957. Writer: George Stallings; Artist and Letterer: Riley Thomson

ed its run adapting the animated sequences of the movie fairly faithfully. Then started original adventures of the smart rabbit who repeatedly outwitted his implacable yet gullible foes, Brer Fox and Brer Bear. As for the wise Uncle Remus, he only appeared as a silhouette on the comic page, providing the narration and the moral in the closing panel.

After Paul Murry left the Studio during the spring of 1946, Dick Moores became the artist. In October 1946, George Stallings took over the writing, and introduced such supporting characters as Molly Cottontail, a pretty bunny who would become Brer Rabbit's girlfriend. The short-continuity format lasted until February 1949, when the page


EXTRA! EX-TRA!
MICKEY MOUSE RETURNS!
CAPTAIN CHURCHMOUSE FOUND! PIRATE TREASURE LOCATED!
EXTRA! EXTRA!
LOOK, MICKEY - THE PAPERS ARE FULL OF STORIES ABOUT YOU HE, HO!
I WISH THEY WOULDN'T PRINT SUCH STUFF!
I DON'T LIKE IT! AN' TOO MUCH PUBLICITY'S LIABLE T' GET YOU INTO TROUBLE!
I SWAPS MICKEY IS RIGHT! POG IN A BIG, DARK HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF TOWN. TWO EVIL-LOOKING MEN ARE READING THE PAPER!
PROFESSOR DOUBLEVY! HERE'S THE FELLOW WE NEED FOR OUR EXPERIMENT!
RIGHT PROFESSOR ECKS! HEH, HEH, HEH! WE'LL GET HIM!

MERRY MENAGERIE
By Walt Disney
DETECTIVE KIT
WALT DISNEY 6-27
© 1968 Walt Disney Productions World Rights Reserved
Distributed by King Features Syndicate.
"The kid's playing Cops and Robbers, and naturally I'M the robber!"

Merry Menagerie daily panel June 27, 1959. Writer: Bob Karp; Artist: Bob Grant.

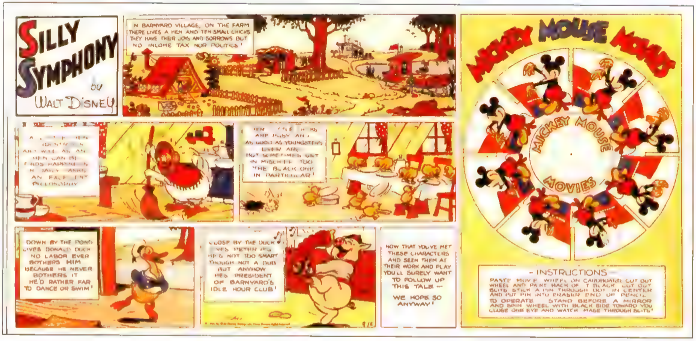
5 – Funny Animals

Under the supervision of Frank Reilly, two new comic series were developed which starred non-anthropomorphic animals. The first was *Merry Menagerie*, which lasted 15 years, from January 13, 1947, until March 17, 1962. This was a daily panel in which animals made ironic comments on their own existential problems, with a caption under each panel translating the animals' language for the benefit of readers. The series was created by Bob Karp, and Roy O. Disney wanted his name to appear on it, but Walt overruled him and *Merry Menagerie* went out as a Disney product, although the characters had little to do with the general Disney output. Moreover, Karp received only half pay for it, on the grounds that he was already receiving full pay for *Donald Duck*. The drawing was provided by the excellent Bob Grant, although during 1961 he was temporarily replaced by Ben DeNunez, Don Lusk and Chuck Fuson.

Another daily panel started on March 14, 1955. *True-Life Adventures* derived its name from Disney's famous series of wildlife documentaries—the first released being 1948's *Seal Island*. During its 18 years the syndicated series presented an endless parade of curious facts about all sorts of animals, plants and even atmospheric phenomena. The information

became gag-a-week, which made it repetitious and boring. The artistic quality of the page, though, was kept consistent by Riley Thomson (1951-59), Bill Wright (1959-62), Chuck Fuson (1962) and finally by John Ushler, with Jack Boyd providing the scripts from late 1963 onwards. In time, the ungrammatical, artificial "Southern Black accent" adopted by almost every character in the series had grown more and more of an anachronism, and somebody might have found it offensive. All in all, few people were surprised when *Uncle Remus* was finally discontinued on December 31, 1972.

September 16, 1934: Donald Duck's comics début in the Silly Symphony series. Writer: Ted Osborne: Artist and Letterer: Al Taliaferro.



WALT DISNEY'S
TREASURY OF CLASSIC TALES
and
THE TRAMP
TRAMP TWISTS AND TURNS IN A FRANTIC BUT FUTILE EFFORT FOR THE VALIANT LADY...
"THE POOR KID! WHAT'LL BECOME OF HER?!"
LADY! LADY! LADY!
MEANWHILE, IN A NEW ENCLOSURE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN, A CURIOUS SCENE IS BEING ENACTED
HOME SWEET HOME
HOME SWEET HOME
EWEP!
HEY, DACHSIE, WHO'RE WE DOIN'?
KEEP ZINGIN' CHUST ONE MORE CHORUS UND VE'RE OUT!
AW, HOLD IT, BOYS!
A DOOR CREAKS OPEN AND A HUGH SETTER OVER THE INMATES OF THE CITY POUND.
OKAY, BABY, N HERE YOU GO...
WELL, WELL! LOOK WHO'S HERE! AVENUE BREBLE!
A FLOOPIN' DEEBONAIR!
P'RETH CROWN JEWEL SHE WEARETH!
WHATCHA GOT, SWEETHEART? PUTTIN' A BEAN ON THE SUITSIE?
HOHO HOHO
HA HA HAHAHA!

April 17, 1955. Writer: Frank Reilly; Penciller: Manuel Gonzales; Inker and Letterer: Dick Moores.

was conveyed in a wry tone by former animator/director/story-man Dick Huemer, and the realistic art was provided by the talented George Wheeler until the strip's final release on April 14, 1973.

6 – Paper Movies

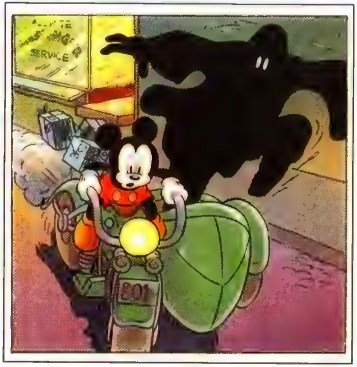
On July 13, 1952, a new Sunday page was introduced, reviving on a regular basis the formula of turning Disney movies into comics. Entitled *Disney's Treasury of Classic Tales*, the new weekly series did not limit itself to adapt animated shorts and features (as *Silly Symphony* had previously done), but it also offered comic versions of live-action movies. In fact, the series started with "The Story of Robin Hood," which had been released just a few weeks earlier. The comic adaptation, which ran for over five months, was written by Frank Reilly and drawn by former animation story-man Jesse Marsh, well known for his long tenure on the *Tarzan* comic books. The second movie to be adapted was the animated feature *Peter Pan* (1953), wonderfully rendered by Manuel Gonzales and Dick Moores, who were to draw three further adaptations, the last and most notable being "Lady and the Tramp" (1955). Reilly went on to write all the continuities until his retirement on October 1, 1975.

The subjects of the series continued to alternate between live-action and animated films. Whereas Marsh continued to draw all the realistic episodes until September 1962 (including an exceptional rendering of the *True-Life Fantasy* documentary film *Perri* in 1957), the animation-inspired continuities were assigned to different artists. Floyd Gottfredson did a great job on "Lambert the Sheepish Lion" (1956, from a 1952 cartoon special), also contributing layouts to "101 Dalmatians" (1961, drawn by Bill Wright and Chuck Fuson). In 1957, Ken Hultgren provided a *Cinderella* spin-off entitled "Gus and Jaq," and the following year animator Julius Svendsen drew an origi-

August 2, 1953. Writer: Frank Reilly; Artist: Jesse Marsh; Letterer: Dick Moores.

nal plot, "The Seven Dwarfs and the Witch-Queen," and adapted "Sleeping Beauty." Joseph H. Hale was the artist on "Babes in Toyland" (1961).

After 1962, there were three main artists on the page, each of them responsible during their years of tenure for both cartoon and live-action adaptations: John Ushler (1962-72), Mike Arens (1972-76) and Richard "Sparky" Moore (1976-87). Notable exceptions were the comic-strip versions of "The Black Hole" (1979-80), drawn by the celebrated comic-book artist Jack Kirby, and of "Condorman" (1980-81), entrusted to the excellent Russ Heath. In late 1982, King Features staff artist Frank Johnson was called in to complete the "Mickey's Christmas Carol" adaptation, during a strike at the Disney Studio (the film, by the way, was released a year later). After Frank



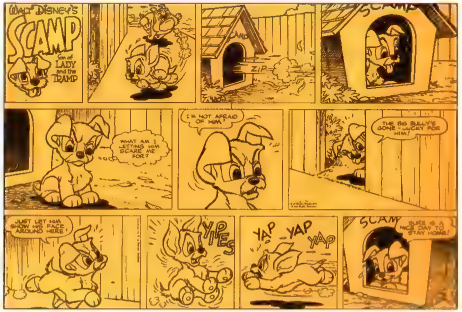
Reilly's retirement, a number of writers including Carl Fallberg, Al Stoffel, Jeanette Steiner and Tom Yakutis provided the scripts (often writing original stories starring characters from classic animated features), until the series was finally cancelled on February 15, 1987.

7 — Like Father, Like Son

Besides being a comics editor at King Features Syndicate, Ward Greene was an accomplished writer. In fact he was the author of the story *Happy Dan, the Whistling Dog, and Miss Patsy, the Beautiful Spaniel*, which served as a basis for the Disney animation feature *Lady and the Tramp* (1955). In the final scene of the film, the litter of puppies produced by Lady and the Tramp were seen, including three females who definitely took after their mother, and Scamp, a little pesky male who was a miniature version of his father. When King Features and Disney agreed to start a strip starring the grey pup, Greene was the natural choice of author. The daily series began on October 31, 1955, and a Sunday page entitled *Scamp—Son of Lady and the Tramp* followed on January 15, 1956. The initial artist on both was Dick Moores. Aside from Scamp, the series featured his parents and sisters as well as other canine friends from the movie (e.g., Old Trusty).

The strip was initially structured in brief continuities, with human beings playing their part alongside the dogs, until May 1956, when the gag-a-day formula was adopted. Shortly after, both Greene and Moores quit (the latter to draw Frank King's *Gasoline Alley*), and were respectively replaced by Bill Berg and Bob Grant, with Manuel Gonzales as an inker. Scamp then became the sole protagonist, and the only human character to appear regularly since then was Scamp's master, a little boy called Albert. Over the years a great many animal friends joined the pup. Among them, Squeeky the mouse, Tiny the dachshund, Cheeps the bluejay, Shakey the chipmunk, Quacky the duck, Bloopy the bulldog and a number of provocative lady dogs. Grant continued to pencil the strip until his death in April 1968 (although he was replaced by Chuck Fuson from 1962-65, and by Bill Weaver and Cliff Nordberg in 1967). Glenn Schmitz succeeded him and stayed on *Scamp* for a year, then came Mike Arens (1969-76), Richard "Sparky" Moore (1976-78) and Roger Armstrong (1978-88), yet until Manuel Gonzales inked the strip it was virtually impossible to distinguish between their different styles. After Gonzales retired in March 1981, the inking was done by Bill Wright (1981-84), Steve Steere (1982), Bill Langley (1984), Larry Mayer (1984-88) and Charles Mendendorp (1988). From February 1984 until the strip's demise in June 1988, the gags were provided by Tom Yakutis.

November 18, 1956. Writer: Bill Berg; Penciller: Bob Grant; Inker and Letterer: Manuel Gonzales.



MY PIGGY BANK MAY BE EMPTY—BUT I KNOW THREE LIVE PIGS WHO ARE NICE AND FULL
OH, THIS IS GOING TO BE A SCRUMPSHUS CHRISTMAS!
POP!
POP! YOU'RE GETTING THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!
GETTING? I'VE GOT IT, LI'L WOLF!
AND I'M GOING OVER TO THE THREE LITTLE PIGS TO SPREAD PEACE AND GOOD WILL!
DING-A-LINGLE!

December 2, 1963: Zeke Wolf and his son, the Li'l Bad Wolf. Writer: Frank Reilly; Artist and Letterer: Floyd Gottfredson.

8 – Merry Christmas a la Disney

In 1960, Frank Reilly started a new comic-strip series by which Disney would be able to send its own Christmas greeting to millions of fans. On November 26 of that year, a special strip drawn by Floyd Gottfredson introduced the first *Christmas Story*, which began the following Monday and ended on December 24. Entitled "Peter Pan's Christmas Story," it featured Peter Pan, Captain Hook, Mr. Smee and Tinker Bell—all of them from the 1952 animated feature *Peter Pan*. The drawing was provided by Manuel Gonzales. Another 27 stories would follow, each year, from 1961-87, appearing in the daily papers during the three and a half weeks leading up to Christmas Eve. They featured mainly characters from the Disney animated features—such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Pinocchio, Cinderella with Gus and Jaq, Bambi and Thumper, Dumbo and Timothy Mouse, Sleeping Beauty and Maleficent, Brer Rabbit, Merlin and Wart and the Dalmatians. Reilly wrote the annual *Christmas Story* until 1975, then Carl Fallberg and Floyd Norman provided the original scripts.

The episodes were drawn by a multitude of Disney Studio staffers and freelancers. Santa Claus (also presented as Merry Kris Kringle, along with his wife Kristina) was a regular guest-star, no matter which other characters were involved: each year he concluded the story by climbing into his reindeer-drawn sled and crying: "A Merry Christmas to one and all!" Among the best episodes there were "The Three Little Pigs' Christmas Story" (1963), drawn by the great Gottfredson, which marked the only newspaper-strip appearance of Zeke Wolf's "degenerate" son, Li'l Bad Wolf (created in 1945 for the comic books by Chase Craig and Carl Buettner); "The Christmas Conspiracy" (1971), drawn by Mike Arens, with a rare syndicated-strip appearance by the Beagle Boys; and "The Day that Christmas Was Banned" (1978), drawn by Tony Strobl and Larry Mayer, which featured characters from the animated film *Robin Hood* (1973). Other artists who worked on the series were Chuck Fuson, John Ushler, Guillermo Cardoso, Cliff Nordberg, James Swain, Tom McKimson, Lorna Smith, Willie Ito and Keith Moseley.

After a five-year hiatus, Disney and King Features brought back the *Christmas Story* formula in November-December 1992, with a *Beauty and the Beast* special daily Christmas strip written by Floyd Norman and drawn by Richard "Sparky" Moore. Another three "specials" followed, respectively featuring characters from *Aladdin* (1993), *The Lion King* (1994) and *Pocahontas* (1995).

9 – Disney Bears

Created by the British author A. A. Milne in 1926, Winnie the Pooh has been a favorite children's character since then. In 1964 Walt Disney bought the rights to make an animated TV special featuring Pooh and his friends Christopher Robin, Eeyore, Owl (originally christened Wol by Milne), Piglet, Tigger, Kanga and Roo. Under the direction of Wolfgang Reitherman, the Disney animators created a 26-minute movie, released in February 1966, called *Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree*. Other cartoon specials followed, and Winnie has since been a perennial success in Disney merchandise.

In 1977, Disney and King Features agreed that the time was ripe for a *Winnie the Pooh* newspaper strip. While Disney's Comic Strip Department was developing the strip (eight weeks' worth of tryout dailies were drawn by Carson Van Osten and Willie Ito), King Features editor Sylvan Byck suggested using a ridiculous knight called Sir Brian as a focal point. Sir Brian duly appeared, in due course to be accompanied by the far-from-frightening Dragon, a character beset by existential problems. The *Winnie the Pooh* strip made its first appearance on Monday, June 19, 1978. Written by Don Ferguson and drawn by Richard "Sparky" Moore (later aided by inker Larry Mayer), it was initially syndicated through some 300 papers. A weekly page commenced the following Sunday. Both offered a combination of a humorous visual approach, designed for children, with gags related to the modern world and everyday problems so that they could be appreciated by grown-ups, too. Despite its high quality and Pooh's début on Saturday-morning television with his own animated series (*The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*), the strip was cancelled in March 1988.

Of the numerous animated characters developed by Disney for television series, only *The Gummi Bears* (whose 95 episodes aired from 1985-91) have had a syndicated-strip release. Their daily and Sunday strips started in September 1986. Written by Lee Nordling and drawn by Rick Hoover, these strips were aimed at very young children (the Sunday page even had an activity panel). The simple gags concerned the adventures of Tummi, Gruffi, Zummi, Sunni and others in a sort of mock-medieval setting. *The Gummi Bears* was cancelled in the spring of 1989.

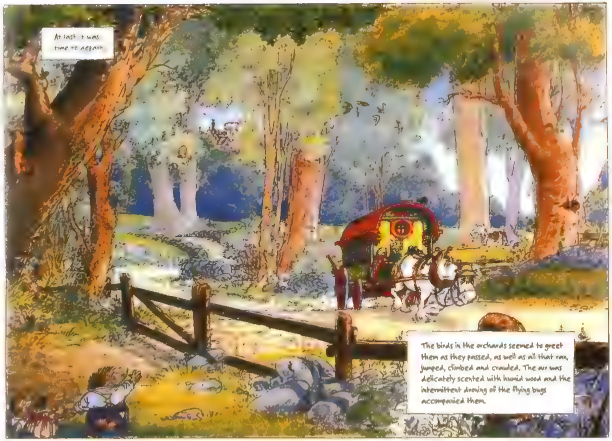
July 7, 1978: Winnie the Pooh and Kanga. Writer: Don Ferguson; Penciller: Sparky Moore; Inker and Letterer: Larry Mayer.

COLOR GALLERY

See R.C. Harvey's "Funnies Farrago" on pages 19-23 for the full story on these illustrations for Grahame's **The Wind in the Willows**.

RACKHAM ART © LIMITED EDITIONS CLUB, INC.

(clockwise from top left) Rackham's Toad and human; Rackham's animals and canary yellow gypsy cart; Shepard's Nature was a friendly, gentle presence; Shepard's animals and cart (Toad bigger than a real toad).


At last it was time to depart.
The birds in the orchards seemed to greet them as they passed, as well as all their run, jumped, climbed and crawled. The air was delicately scented with humid wood and the intermittent droning of the flying bugs accompanied them.

(above) Plessix's woodland is every bit as knotty as Rackham's.

The afternoon sun was getting low. Rat was reciting poems to himself while daydreaming. As for Mole, he was very full of lunch and of the delightful day.
"Spring all around
Fills us anew.
The world of sound
Wakes and hymns, too.
The frog croaks
while the sparrow jokes
I'm ready to dine
with a fine glass of wine."
SWISH

(below) Leaving out any indication of watery waves, Plessix creates a blissful, placid surface along which Rat and Mole paddle contentedly, without serious disruption.

COLOR GALLERY

WHAT COULD BE PRETTIER THAN A WOMANS HANDS IN WASHING-WATER
I wonder what idiot came up with that?
Why do people dirty their clothes? They could pay attention after all!
A woman's hands maybe, but surely not those of a Toad!!
It was the worst week the Toad had ever had to do. Everyone else was the first day who ever saw the ridiculous idea that it was necessary to do the wash.
HA HA HA HA!
Thought so. You're no more a washer-woman than I'm a rat at the opera house!
It's true! I'm the Toad! The very famous, genuine Herman Hueff automobiles!
I'm the greatest, the most handsome, the most elegant, the most...
NASTY!
A NASTY TOAD! NOW HORRIBLE!!
I'LL SHOW YOU!
Madame!

A fugitive, Toad hides out with a barge woman, who makes him do her laundry. Plessix creates the comedic central tier with a cartoonist's sensibility—successive panels reveal both action and comedy.

Irwin Hasen: By the Bootstraps

Inspiration Central

by Bill Baker

Irwin Hasen is perhaps best known as the primary force behind the Dondi *comic strip, which he co-created with Gus Edson in 1955 and penned until the mid-eighties. However, Hasen had his start in the Golden Age of comic books, entering the field in the late thirties after getting his start as a newspaper sports cartoonist. His innate talent for rendering dynamic figures soon landed him work on DC's line of super hero titles, doing some interior work on* Green Lantern *and the Wildcat feature in* Sensation Comics, *as well as a series of notable covers. Hasen took a few moments from signing and sketching for fans during a visit to the 2001 Pittsburgh Comic con to talk about his primary influences, the biggest pitfall associated with working on a syndicated strip, and how all of those memorable comic book covers were created.*

Comic Book Marketplace: Irwin, as one of the founding fathers of the Golden Age of comics, who were some of your inspirations, and how did they influence you and your work?

Irwin Hasen: My inspirations during those early days of the Golden Age? I had to be self-inspired, because these were all my contemporaries. Actually, I could mention a few.

Alex Toth, to me, is the best. I was his idol! [General laughter] And I still can't believe it to this day, because I thought he was the best of all of 'em. [Joe] Kubert. [Carmine] Infantino. Sheldon Moldoff. Shelly Mayer, the editor. Julie Schwartz, the editor. But they were all young people in those days, so my idols in those days were the ones I mentioned, the ones I saw working alongside of me. Mort Meskin, Joe Kubert, etc., etc.

But, in the comic strip area—I did *Dondi*, of course [there was] another set of heroes of mine. I had two worlds to take [inspiration] from. Roy Crane. *Wash Tubbs*. Every cartoonist thinks he's the best in the world, and he's the simplest. The simplest. And, of course, Milton Caniff. But Roy Crane is my [comic strip] idol.

CBM: What about Crane's work really touched you?

Hasen: First of all, when I was about fourteen years old, [or] twelve years old, I used to get *The World Telegram* newspaper in New York City—we used to have 14 newspapers, or 12; now we have two. I saw his first strip of *Wash Tubbs*, and I think, in the back of my head when I was a kid, I said, "That's what I want to do. I wanna do a comic strip!"

The other guys in our business, the ones I mentioned before, didn't have their eye on that dream of a syndicated newspaper strip. I sort of felt that I was making a living as a comic book artist; but, in the back of my head [there was always one personal goal for me: a] syndicated strip. And my dream came true. By accident.

But his simplicity, Roy Crane's simplicity. And that is the bottom line for every newspaper cartoonist. [In a] comic book, you've got to elaborate [visually]. But newspaper comic strips, he was the master. I use the word simplicity so much, 'cause that's the core of a cartoonist.

CBM: It really does come down to an assured control of your line, doesn't it?

Hasen: Absolutely. Instant communication with the compositions is everything. You can't do this shot or that shot in a newspaper.

CBM: Now, did that need for simplicity arise from the size of the page as much as the printing techniques back then?

Hasen: Actually, at the beginning of the newspaper cartoon strips as we knew it, they had enough space. I used to have five columns in the *Daily News*! Today, you got a little half inch [of space total]!

CBM: The crossword puzzle is bigger.

Hasen: That's it! Touché. The size has dwindled down to the point [that it's ridiculous]. And I blame this—I can say this now—[on] advertising. They're the villains. And the corporate structure of the newspaper. They say to them,

"Get rid of the comics, or make 'em smaller, 'cause we got ads to put in! What the hell do we need comic strips [for]? We got ads!!" [His voice has risen, and he's obviously imitating a sales rep he's heard.] You see that? I get excited, 'cause I've been there. And I've heard advertising men from the newspaper [demand that editorial shrink a strip in size]. In front of me and Gus Edson, the co-creator of *Dondi*, [one of them] said, "Chop *Dondi* down to half a page so we can get this Pepsodent toothpaste ad in." In front of me! I heard them on a trip, once, and I never forgot it. They had such contempt.

Because that's what the world is—in America, anyway—commercial marketing. The comic strip is not what it was in those days. Nothing is, really. [Laughter]

CBM: I'm just surprised that the ad folks didn't think of product placement back then. "Oh, Dondi's gotta brush his teeth with Pepsodent today, Irwin!"

Hasen: Oh, absolutely!

CBM: Do you think you might have considered something like that to avoid the harassment?

Hasen: Never do it. I wouldn't do it. At the cost of my livelihood? Maybe. I don't know. I never married, I never had a lot of family and children to worry about, "How do I support 'em?" So I can easily say that. But, if you have to support your family, you put the toothpaste in Dondi's hand. I didn't have to do that.

CBM: On the comic book side—you mentioned Toth, and his incredible line and sense of design, etc.—how did you incorporate that kind of thing into your work?

Hasen: In the comic book the format is dictated by the magazine size and breaking down a story for twelve pages. And you gotta have the plot, and you break down the plot, and you make compositions, etc. That's another ball game in terms of comic strips and comic book. And, also, you had editors right on your heels, sitting down with you and telling you what they want, what they don't want.

My forte, if I may say so in the comic book business, was comic book covers. That was my forte, and I have a lot of them to prove [it]. I did a lot of *Wonder Woman* covers. I did *All Star*, I did Justice Society—covers. Inside, I couldn't fit in.

CBM: Was it something about the storytelling in that format?

Hasen: It just didn't click for me. I didn't have any self-esteem about it. As I say, I was lucky to be able to make a living in those days doing that. But I had low [self]esteem, believe it or not, doing comic book stuff as opposed to all my other contemporaries [such as] Kubert, etc. But I felt when I got a cover, one picture to do, [I excelled at it].

CBM: How did you approach that kind of assignment? Was there a lot of planning on your part beforehand?

Hasen: Oh, yeah. You went to an editor. In those days, they had Editors like him [points to a bemused Julie Schwartz, who's seated next to him].

Julie Schwartz: That's Editor, with a capital "e"! [General laughter]

Hasen: And they sat down with you in an office, and [they'd] tell you what they wanted. Either [based on] what the content of the book was, or "Irwin, we got something, can you come up with this idea?" They laid down some kind of law, a rule [governing the covers generally, such as] "We want Green Lantern with a cape, coming down at the enemies, the foes," and then you sat down with the editor, and then thought about it. And you sat with the editor [discussing it], and then you went home.

CBM: So you might do some thumbnails while talking the cover over?

Hasen: Absolutely. It was close contact.

CBM: Did anyone, outside of the editor you were immediately working with, have any effect on your comic book work?

Hasen: Sheldon Mayer was the editor up at DC for many years, and we became very close. But he was the one who used to tell me [what I did wrong], and get very angry at my work. He'd throw it up on the ceiling! [General laughter] He's dead now, and he was my close friend. But he was a bit of a character, and brilliant in letting you know where you went wrong, "And don't let it happen again! And don't bring in work like you just gave me!" And he threw [the work up to the ceiling].

But he taught me. That was his process of telling me how to [do good work]. And, as I say, there was no one creator [of comic books] in those days. Maybe Bob Kane, and Siegel and Schuster, and [they were] the only ones who really created [books on their own]. The rest—all of us—were nurtured by editors. But you had to work your tail off, and have your own talent [to develop].

THE MIRACLEMAN STORY

by Michael Browning

People want to see *Miracleman* back in print. That, however, won't be happening anytime soon, it seems, with the two "owners" tied up in what could be a lengthy court battle to determine ownership. If fans want to find back issues to read or to collect, they know they have to pay the price. But, fans can always find several issues of *Miracleman* for sale on eBay and other online stores and auction houses every day. One thing everyone notices when they look for Miracleman is that every single issue is selling at higher-than-*Guide* prices.

The character has been hot ever since it came to the United States from England's *Warrior* magazine. These days, it just keeps heating up. Alan Moore's work is widely lauded by the comic book community and this groundbreaking series from the early 1980s is one of his classics. Then, in addition to Moore's work, you have early work from Alan Davis, Rich Veitch, John Totleben, Chuck Austen and Neil Gaiman. All that makes for one very hot series. Every single issue of the 24-book run is going for above *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* prices and the amounts being paid for the key issues are almost astounding. Several issues reach the $75 mark and issue 15 even breaks the $150 mark occasionally. The later editions are truly rare. Issues 23 (with its purple cover that is easily smudged by fingers) and 24 could possibly be more rare than the already-hard-to-find issue 15. Fans are finding out that some of the formerly easy-to-find issues aren't that easy to find these days, as issues 8 and 9 are tough to get and issues 13, 14 and 16 just as difficult to locate.

Everyone, it seems, wants to complete their set of *Miracleman* and own all the collectibles. Miracleman art, which is hardly ever seen for sale, is snatched up almost as quickly as it is offered. One page, with the first transformation from Mike Moran to Miracleman, went for

Hotter than the atomic fires in which he is bathed when he says the magic word "Kimota!", *Miracleman* may be the hottest back issue series on the market. With Neil Gaiman and Todd McFarlane fighting over the rights to the character in a very public feud and no one knowing who actually owns the copyrights, the Eclipse Comics series continues to get hotter and hotter.

more than $3,000 recently on eBay. With all the buzz, Miracleman collectors are finding it hard to complete their collections.

But, there are two editions of a *Miracleman* issue that many wonder about. Not many people believe the two editions exist. They aren't found in any of the guides. One dealer said if he had copies of either, he'd sell them for $1,000 each. Several dealers were interested in finding copies after learning they do exist. One dealer said the two books would be worthless.

The *Miracleman* books in question are the *Miracleman* #1 gold and blue editions. While the gold edition is listed in *The Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, the blue edition isn't. The *Guide* says there are gold and *silver* editions, but there is no silver edition. Technically, there is really no gold edition. Confused?

Here's the deal: In 1985, at the San Diego ComiCon, American Comics sold the first 1,000 copies of *Miracleman* #1 that were released. On hand for the sale of the first 1,000 copies was MM writer Alan Moore and Eclipse Comics publishers Dean Mullaney and Cat Yronwode. All three were signing books at the convention. Moore signed the gold copies, which were limited to only 400, while Cat and Dean signed the blue editions, which weren't numbered, but were limited (as far as anyone knows) to the rest of the first-sold copies, which would be the other 600 books.

The signatures are found on the first page of each issue. This may be the final convention signing Alan Moore ever did, as he doesn't do comic conventions nowadays. The covers are the same as the regular editions, but they have gold and blue cards to show what edition it was that the collectors at the 1985 San Diego ComiCon were buying. There are no different ads, no different indicia information. Nothing on the cover says gold or blue edition. It's all in the cards.

(above) Splash page of **Miracleman** #1, gold edition; this scan was curved and shadowed on its left edge, and has been altered to approximate the true appearance. (below) Splash page of the blue edition, scan unaltered.

The gold edition has a gold card with the San Diego ComiCon logo and is basically a certificate of authenticity, with more signatures and what number it is of the 400. The blue edition has the same art, but on a blue card. See the illustration in this article for more details.

Tracking the Gold and Blue Editions

For years I had looked in shops all across the east coast trying to find either of these two Miracleman Holy Grails. But, I had no luck finding them. From shop to shop to shop I searched, but to no avail. No one had them and not many had ever seen them. I knew, however, that they did exist, so I continued my search.

I had seen American Comics ads for them in other comics from that period, with a price of $50 for the gold edition and $20 for the blue, so I knew they were out there somewhere. That was a lot of money for comics in 1985, so I never ordered one, even though I wanted one of each. I realized that there had to be collectors out there with gold or blue editions, and in some cases both of the books. And I wanted one.

Early last year, I moved to Tennessee from West Virginia and lived there for nearly six months. The entire time I lived in Tennessee, I searched high and low for the gold and blue editions (Tennessee has comics shops all over its eastern side). After many weeks of traveling to flea markets

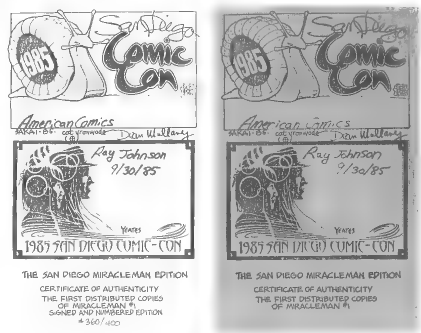
and comics shops, I finally found one dealer who said he knew a man who had purchased several copies at the San Diego Con in 1985, but that if he were able to get one out of the collector's hands, he'd have to sell it for $1,000. He said both the gold and blue copies would be worth somewhere in that range, because of their scarcity and the increasing demand for MM rarities. He cited the ever-growing prices of issue 15 and the trade paperbacks and hardback reprints and how much MM collectibles were bringing online. He said he'd just sold a set of *MM* from #1-15 for $350. He said he had been selling *MM*s for a while and all of his issues had been sold for way over *Guide* prices.

The retailer, a Knoxville dealer who has been in business for several years, claimed to have never seen any other copies other than those his friend brought home from San Diego. He believes nearly all of the copies are in the hands of serious collectors, who don't want to sell them and don't want to let people know anything about them. The retailer said he'd try to get either a blue or gold copy and I agreed to buy one if he could locate it for whatever price he charged. But, he was never able to get a copy from his friend and I've since moved back to my native West Virginia.

After searching online for anyone with any knowledge of Miracleman, I found one dealer who specialized in the Eclipse series. I asked about the gold and blue editions and after letting the dealer know what I had discovered about them, this is the reply I received:

> Thanks for the info. All this does is tell me that they are NOT special printings, which to me is the key factor, but instead they are simply "convention/show" premiums. They may be sought after, and please don't misinterpret this, but at the "geeky/fanboy" level. They are not "true" editions but merely a promotional item.

Wow. When I had approached other dealers, they all wanted to see copies and said they would be worth a bundle, since it's so rare. I get a little suspicious of dealers who try to devalue books they don't have in stock. Sometimes it seems these dealers are trying to tell me the books I have that they want for themselves aren't worth much. Then, as soon as I'd trade or sell the books to those retailers, they go up on the wall with outrageously high price tags.



Miracleman #1 gold card, (right) the blue card.

Confirmation: They Do Exist

After years of searching, I was able to find and purchase both a gold and blue edition. They both cost me quite a few dollars, but were well worth it. Both my gold and blue editions are exactly as I described them. Prior to finding them, I turned in the information to the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* folks and for some reason it never made it into the *Guide*. Oh well, maybe next year.

These two editions are premiums, much like those being marketed today for the collector's market. They have historical significance in that they are autographed by the comic's writer and publishers and that makes them super rare. Try finding these on eBay. No matter what one retailer says, these are truly the Miracleman Grails and collectors need to be informed of their existence. Just like the hard-to-find non-3-D, 3-D edition, these books are the rarest of the rare when it comes to MM comics.

Michael Browning is the managing editor of The Logan Banner, *a daily newspaper in southern West Virginia. He has collected comics since the age of four and is an advisor for the* Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide *and specializes in all things Miracleman.*

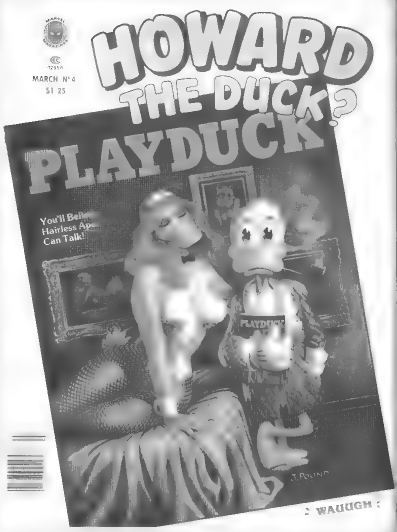
Dr. Bong. SUDD. The Space Turnip. Pro Rata, the mad accountant.

Ahhh—the dazzling, resplendently audacious cast of characters in the universe of Howard the Duck! Now consider...

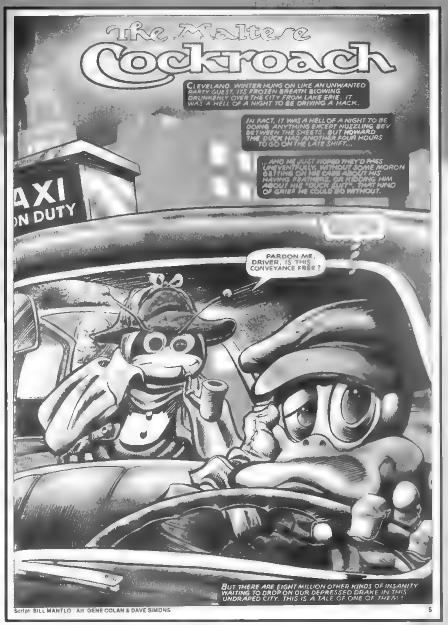
The Facts in the Case of R. L. HAN

by Tony Gleeson

Ladies and gentlemen who pursue the noble passion of Comic Book Collecting, I direct your attention to Exhibit A: *Howard the Duck Magazine* Number Four, dated March of 1980, and, more specifically, to the lead story by Bill Mantlo and Gene Colan, "The Maltese Cockroach." The tale is a typically bizarre Howard yarn, with outrageously imaginative supporting players and bristling with wisequackery. It begins when Hemlock Shoals, a giant dimension-spanning caterpillar in deerstalker cap, steps into Howard's cab in Cleveland and transports him to Manhattan and to a quaint metropolitan bookstore called "Barqu Books." His search, satirically echoing the famed Bogart movie concerning a falcon statuette, is for an instrument of unimaginable power called the Cosmic Key. At Barqu they find the Key and encounter the evil (actually "not evil—just obnoxious") Uncanny Cockroach, with whom they battle for the very fate of the universe. Pivotal to our heroes' ultimate success is the proprietor of the bookstore, a Stetson-wearing, knife-savvy character named R. L. Haney, the "Yakima Yahoo." In fact, R. L. is the hero of the epic, saving the day not once but twice with his intrepid skills with blade and walking stick!



The page 5 splash for "The Maltese Cockroach."


The Maltese Cockroach
CLEVELAND. WINTER HUNG ON LIKE AN UNWANTED PARTY GUEST. ITS FROZEN BREATH BLOWING ORNAMENTLY OVER THE CITY FROM LAKE ERIE. IT WAS A HELL OF A NIGHT TO BE DRIVING A HACK.
IN FACT, IT WAS A HELL OF A NIGHT TO BE DOING ANYTHING EXCEPT NUZZLING BEV BETWEEN THE SHEETS. BUT HOWARD THEODORE HONK HAD TWO HOURS TO GO ON THE LATE SHIFT...
AND HE JUST KNEW THEY'D PACK LAST FARE WITH SOME MORON RAMBLING ON ABOUT HIS TROUBLES. ABOUT HIS TROUBLES, SHIT. THAT KIND OF GRIEF HE COULD DO WITHOUT.
AXI
ON DUTY
PARDON ME, DRIVER, IS THIS CONVEYANCE FREE?
BUT THERE ARE EIGHT MILLION OTHER KINDS OF INSANITY WAITING TO DROP ON OUR DEARTICED CRAW, IN THIS UNDRAPED CITY. THIS IS A TALE OF ONE OF THEM...
Script: BILL MANTLO Art: GENE COLAN & DAVE SIMONS
5

E Y

Any fan of Howard over the years would have come to expect odd and colorful characters in the stories, and giant evil cockroaches and sleuthing caterpillars filled the bill nicely. So did the carefully-characterized and charmingly gruff R. L. Haney. Something to ponder, however: while I would unhesitatingly doubt the existence of the intelligent arthropods, I am here to tell you that R. L. Haney really existed, in flesh and blood, and continues to do so, and in real life was far more interesting than any comic creation could ever be. In fact, I knew him well!

Manhattan in 1974 was an exciting place to be—not necessarily the optimum time and place for a green aspiring comic artist, but thrilling and energizing all the same. The streets may have been full of dog droppings (the "doggie laws" had not yet been passed) and garbage (there was at least one sanitation strike) but the atmosphere was full of energy—and unlimited possibility. It was in this environment that I encountered one of the more memorable characters to enter a life already resplendent with the unforgettable.

I had come to New York out of art school in 1974 to look for work. Most days I would labor in a Queens apartment over a cheap beat-up drawing board, sweating over meticulously-penciled and inked samples. Or I would board the IRT subway and pound the pavements of Manhattan, seeking someone with the taste and insight to recognize the potential superstar who had strode into their office that morning and emptied a beat up cardboard portfolio of original drawings all over their desk. Evenings were increasingly spent on Manhattan's Upper West Side in the companionship of accumulated friends—and what a bunch they were!

One of my old co-adventurers, with whom I had traversed the country, had found himself back in New York and was residing in a brownstone on West 74th Street, over a small coffeehouse, called Focus 2, that he helped to operate. A small cadre of musicians, writers, artists and just plain exceptional characters hung out at his home and at the coffeehouse. Among these folks was R. L. Haney, the proprietor of a small bookstore, Barqu Books on West 71st Street. Most of us preferred to call him Bob. Bob's shop was a self-described "browser's haunt," the type of used and rare bookshop that is sadly disappearing from the face of America. Customers were never pressured to buy and run—the whole cluttered atmosphere of the store was conducive to staying and schmoozing. The furniture throughout the store was more reminiscent of an old lived-in parlor

HOWARD ART © MARVEL

R. L. Haney

or bedroom. Once-elegant (but now beat-up) chairs were strewn about; their focal point was the center proper of Barqu Books. It was nigh impossible to not dally and chew the fat at Barqu. No doubt the register suffered from the hangout traffic but the ambience was easy-going and welcoming. On occasion, closing time would roll around, and Bob would bid us to continue our conversations with him at the pub on Columbus Avenue (unforgettably for me, it was called Gleason's), more often than not as his treat.

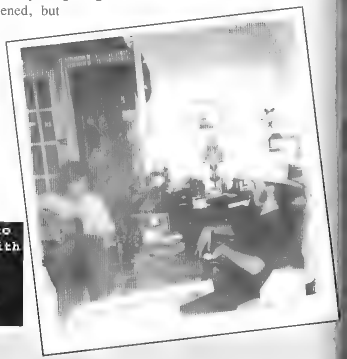
Bob himself was one of the most striking characters I ever knew. He was shrouded in mystery. It was impossible to determine his age—he could have been anywhere from a hard-living late twenties to perhaps a youthful fifty. He was grizzled and unshaven and usually dressed in black, with an omnipresent Stetson hat, and he had a fondness for collecting and displaying large, ornate, very sharp Western knives. There was no refinement or nicety about this guy: you got what you saw, and if you did not like it, it was fine with him if you headed for the door. Remarkably, despite the man's rough-hewn quality, we could not help noticing the number of stunningly attractive female companions who often appeared in his company. He would tell us small snippets of his life, odd items that always had us wondering if any of it was actually true. He claimed to be from the state of Washington and an adopted child of Yakima Indians. He told tales of prior parts of his life in other places. We noted that, as implausible as his stories were, they always seemed to be consistent and never did one seem to contradict another. The pieces all fit together, if one were diligent enough to collect them and arrange them.

One of the elements of the R.L. Haney persona was that he was said to be the writer of Batman.

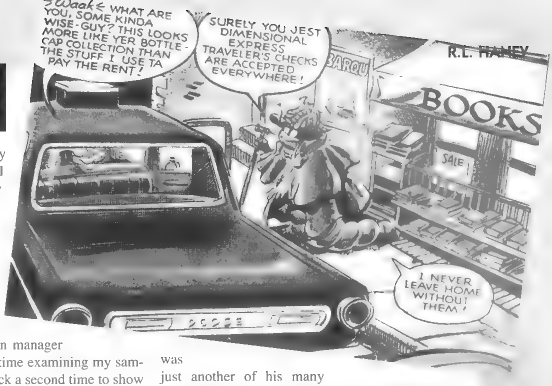
At face value, we had little reason to doubt this. At that time it was not yet exactly high cachet to be known as a comic book writer. Few people would have had reason to represent themselves thusly in a world of non-fans. There was, indeed, a writer of the Batman stories in *Brave and Bold* named Bob Haney; I knew enough about comic creators to realize that it was not unthinkable that our friend could be him. One night at Barqu I even found a fan tabloid from a New York convention that had run a picture of Bob on its front page with the caption "*Brave and Bold* writer Bob Haney." So there was little reason for any of us to not accept this as fact. Among our friends, Bob was the guy who ran a bookshop and wrote Batman.

To be honest, we had all heard stranger stories among the souls who congregated around Barqu, and we tended to give each other the benefit of the doubt when the stories got tenuous. We were, after all, a daring and creative lot, and prided ourselves on being so, and we did come from a variegated and wild set of backgrounds. Sometimes the wildest tales were the true ones.

Being an aspiring comic artist, I often asked Bob for his help in getting a door or two opened, but



Author's only photo of R. L. Haney. With guitar is singer-songwriter Rod MacDonald. Detail above by author.


WHAT ARE YOU, SOME KINDA WISE-GUY? THIS LOOKS MORE LIKE YER BOTTLE-CAP COLLECTION THAN THE STUFF I USE TA PAY THE RENT!
SURELY YOU JEST DIMENSIONAL EXPRESS TRAVELER'S CHECKS ARE ACCEPTED EVERYWHERE!
BARQU
R.L. HANEY
BOOKS
SALE!
I NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT THEM!

Interior of Barqu Books as drawn in the toward the Duck story (detail of page 9).

he always demurred. My assumption was he believed I had the stuff to make it on my own and wanted me to go that route. At the time it was not an easy matter to get noticed by the major comics publishers in New York. One time I had gotten my foot in the door at DC to show my work and had been referred for some reason to production manager Sol Harrison. He spent some time examining my samples and actually asked me back a second time to show him more work—especially my life drawings—saying he was interested in seeing not how I drew comics but how I drew, period. On our second meeting, he tried to interest me in something called the "Junior Bullpen." I recounted the story one evening over a pitcher of beer to Bob, and he told me, "Oh... that's just a bunch of little kids who do paste-ups and gopher jobs for the editors. Stay away from that." As it turns out, neither Sol nor anybody else at DC ever did offer me anything resembling a job or an assignment, so the advice—and its veracity—were a moot point. But it did further bolster in my mind the concept that my friend Bob did indeed have a working knowledge of the world at DC Comics. (I ultimately found myself more accepted in the world of science-fiction, first doing interior illustrations for magazines and then book cover paintings. The world of comics remained a step removed, its mysteries remaining just that.)

Bob's comics connections were always low-key and in passing. He never gave the impression of being a "fan" or even that interested in comics per se, though he was obviously knowledgeable. His comments were terse and almost reluctant, as if to say that whatever he did for the comics was just another of his many writing gigs. The impression given was that there were in fact two guys named Bob Haney writing for DC Comics, and that he himself only wrote some stories, while the other, better-known Bob Haney was responsible for all those war tales and many of the other pieces. He maintained the tacit impression that he was, in fact, not all that important around the DC offices and in the shadow of his similarly-named colleague, and that suited him just fine. Still in all, he did know several active creatives in the comics world. The tacit mystery grew.

Author-drawn logo for the bookstore, commissioned by R.L. Haney.

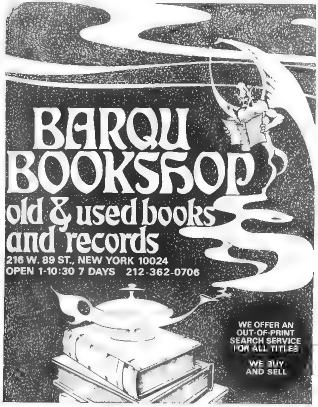
I found myself spending increasingly more time on West 71st street with Bob and the amazing cast of players that crossed the stage of Barqu. To feel totally comfortable in this place required a certain openness to adventure and new things. There were always heated discussions taking place over arcane or obscure topics involving art, music, radical politics, philosophy, or life in general. Conspiracy theories.

novel and carefully substantiated, abounded. The level of intellect was impressively high; the lines of thought were seldom routine or predictable. Like some bizarre sitcom, a regular stream of recurring characters would make an appearance, along with a few special guest stars from time to time. One local was a guy who had not long before been a horn player in a high-profile rock band before burning out; he now wandered into establishments like Barqu, muttering incoherently and sometimes threateningly, and was tolerantly ignored. Another occasional visitor was Robert Payne, an accomplished poet and historical writer responsible for several biographies, Lenin among them, and "Eyewitness," a dashing memoir of his own quite remarkable globe trotting adventures in the early twentieth century. And then there was Lash LaRue in the flesh.

One beautiful spring afternoon, I walked into Barqu to find a full circle of participants already into their conversation—and a bottle of Scotch. It took little prodding for me to join the festivities. Among the gathering were two individuals I had never met before: a tall, muscular guy in a cowboy hat, cutoff shirt, and tattoos, and his quiet and affable wife. The cowboy had a full-size bullwhip laying across his lap, and in the course of the conversation, he

Page 11 of the story, and the introduction of the fictional R.L. Haney.

described himself as a bullwhip expert whose boyhood hero had been Lash LaRue. Around the time the bottle had been inspected by all, the question was put forth whether he could remove a cigarette from Bob's mouth with his whip. The well-oiled cowboy took the challenge, coiled his whip, and strode woozily outside. An equally-oiled Bob agreed to put a butt in his mouth and stand perhaps twenty paces down the sidewalk. The rest of us weaved out to watch and give encouragement where needed. The cowpoke gave a couple of practice cracks with alarming sharpness, then proceeded to WHACK, WHACK, WHACK little hunks of the cigarette out of Bob's mouth, never touching him but coming within very uncomfortable fractions of an inch as he did so. The rest of us applauded and hooted. We all repaired back into the store to celebrate, and guitars were produced for us all to cheerily make up shady and dubious lyrics to old country and gospel standards. Just another day at Barqu.


BARQU
BOOKSHOP
old & used books
and records
216 W. 89 ST., NEW YORK 10024
OPEN 1-10:30 7 DAYS 212-362-0706
WE OFFER AN OUT-OF-PRINT SEARCH SERVICE FOR ALL TITLES
WE BUY AND SELL

Another commissioned piece by the author, a Barqu Books ad.

A word about the name Barqu itself: Bob claimed this

Page 14, the thick plot thickens.

transaction liberally. I proudly rode the Number Seven subway train back to my home at the end of the line in Flushing, my new prize tucked securely under my jacket and held tightly against my chest. I might get mugged that evening, but by heaven Arthur Rackham would not!

From time to time Bob would solicit a new Barqu drawing from me to advertise his store, and always paid me quite generously in merchandise. As an impoverished artist, I gathered what I saw as a handsome profit from his rare art books and second-hand classic jazz LPs. To this day many of those items still hold a place of value in my library—and my memories.

Bob also played guitar and wrote music of a

NOT LOOKING, POW!—ILLUSTRATING A PHILOSOPHERS' STONE?
TRUE, HEY!
YEE, OH COCKNEY HEY! RECEPTACLE OF POWER? MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF BARQU? WHO HOLDS THE KEY TO MY DESTINY?
I SAY, OLD MAN... DO YOU KNOW THIS GENTLEMAN?
SEE, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO HALLOO HIM FOR SOME TIME, BUT HE'S NEVER COME AT HEED BEFORE
OUT OF NO WHERE, HE'S ALL OF A SUDDEN IN CUSTODY!
THIS IS A VERY HARVARDIOUS
I WILL TROUBLESOME HIM ONLY ONCE MORE! FOR YOU, BEHOLD, I SHOW YOU THE SECRET OF CREATION
YOUR BONES, MY BACK! I SHALL BE BACK! I SHALL BE BACK! DARKNESS, YES! DARKNESS, YES! DARKNESS, YES

rockabilly sort. There were several unsubstantiated (and un-refuted) rumors of Bob's earlier involvement with key musical figures, of course. We kidded him that he saw himself as a new incarnation of Elvis. There were many evenings we stayed up playing music until the dawn's early light. One of the most memorable of Bob's exploits was his "Concert of Death... An Evening of the Music of R.L. Haney" on the Focus 2 stage for the benefit of the coffeehouse. He asked me to design a newspaper ad to promote it, and I obliged with a Stetson-hatted guitar-playing skeleton. For this evening he shanghaied a number of his musician friends to back him up, an indescribable performance highlighted by his soulful and inimitable rendition of "Heartbreak Hotel."

"AND IT WAS IN ONE SUCH DISMAL PLACE IN THE SUBWAY, INCIDENTALLY, THAT MY LIFE CHANGED!!!"
YOU SHOVED! YOU DOPE! I CAN SPEND MY LIFE AS I PLEASE! I'VE HAD IT WITH YOUR KIND SNOOPING AT THE SUPPER TABLE!
I TOOK TO HIDING IN THE SUBWAY!
I'LL SHOW YOU! I TOOK TO HIDING IN THE SUBWAY!
I'LL SHOW YOU!
I'LL SHOW YOU!
I'LL SHOW YOU

Englishman's den, spectacularly overlooking Central Park, discussing (and politely arguing) the style and content of the illustrations, are indelible.

In my library there still reside books from Bob that were given as presents. A first edition of Lind Ward's remarkable *Storyteller Without Words*, a massive book of stories told in woodcut without a single word of text—a sort of high-art graphic novel—is inscribed in the front, "...and finally, something you can read... RLH." Another book on Irish history, a special love of mine, is inscribed "To Tony Glees and His Lovely Anne...Dec. 1976...with love from the Barqu boys."

Two final anecdotes about Bob illustrate other facets of his character. My wife Annie and I were married in 1976, at her mother's home, followed by a reception on the premises, and the accumulated guests included liberal doses of middle-aged Long Island suburban professionals and a cast of our own rather Bohemian artist and musician friends, an interesting mix indeed. Bob came to our wedding dressed entirely in black, including black cowboy hat and duster coat, earthy, terse and uncompromising as ever, and was the conversation piece of the afternoon. He made a point of disappearing during the short ceremony itself, later explaining he had serious trouble with ritual of any kind. Bob made a point of intermingling thoroughly and making his presence known—and decades later, people still comment on him from that day!

Some years later, after we had moved to the West Coast, we were visiting Annie's mother on Long Island, and tried to contact some of our old Manhattan friends to come visit us on our short stay. Literally the only one who judged it worth the trouble to grab the Long Island Railroad and came out to see us was Bob. Treating us to dinner, he delighted in mischievously perplexing a new, nervous young waiter with snipe-hunt tactics. Later, when we returned to the house, he regaled a friend of the family, an older man in the scientific community with whom one would have assumed Bob had little in common, in a spirited and warm conversation. He was full of surprises and never ceased to amaze. He was not only a character—he HAD character as well.

Page 19, an atypical hasty exit from Barqu Books.

It was sometime after we had relocated in southern California that a mutual friend sent me a copy of *Howard the Duck Magazine* #4 with the cryptic note that somehow our friend Bob did not seem out of place alongside a giant cockroach and a cigar-smoking, talking duck in pants. There they were, written into the Howard storyline as integral elements, along with said giant roach—the Barqu bookstore and one R. L. Haney, "the Yakima Yahoo." In fact, my old friend was the hero of the tale! Even his proclivity for knives was importantly worked into the plot. If ever I had had any reason to doubt Bob's involvement in the world of comics, this shattered it for certain!

Events and people have a tendency of being left behind in the passing of time, and that happened with many of my old friends and haunts in upper Manhattan. Soon I had no idea where Bob Haney had disappeared to, and subsequent efforts to contact him on later trips East were for naught. Barqu Books was long gone. R. L. was no longer in the Manhattan phone book and nobody knew his whereabouts, though I did try in every way I could devise to locate him. We assumed he had picked up stakes and moved on. Many of the folks

Page 26, R.L. Haney and his prowess with a vorpal blade, WIP!

TOUCHE!
AU REVOIR, ROACH!
WOOSH
WOOSH
WOOSH
Gnnnggg!
NO! ≥CHOKE≤ I WILL NOT ≥HACK-HACK≤ BE BEATEN ≥COUGH≤ BEFORE I TAKE ≥GASP≤ ONE OF YOU ≥WHEEZE≤ WITH ME!
AND ≥HACK-HACK≤ SINCE IT WAS YOU, HOWARD, WHO ≥COUGH≤ DEFEATED ME--
YOU ARE ≥WHEEZE≤ ELECTED TO PRECEDE ME ≥CHOKE≤ INTO OBLIVION!
NOW, HUMAN! RELEASE THE DAGGER-POINT IN MY WALKING STICK!
NO SWEAT, SHOALS! THERE AIN'T A BLADE MADE THAT I CAN'T HANDLE!
THEN THROW TRUE, MY FRIEND - FOR HOWARD'S LIFE DEPENDS ON IT!
R.L. HANEY TOOK AIM AND TOSSED...
SWACK
...AND THE UNCANNY COCKROACH WAS AS NEATLY SKEWERED AS ANY SHISKABOB!
G GLLKKK!
≥WAAICHH≤

The Case of R.L. Haney

with whom I had spent so much time had vanished into thin air. That was the kind of life many of them led, free and unfettered. Either they had flown the coop or else had taken on the trappings of responsible society and divorced themselves from their former lives. In either case, I knew I would probably encounter very few of them ever again. The time and scene had simply passed. My own life went through just as many transfigurations: I left my drinking and adventuring days behind and raised a family and built a practice as an artist and illustrator in California.

It was in the '90s that the case of R. L. Haney began to take on for me the trappings of a mystery to be solved. I began working for Neal Adams at the West Coast branch of his Continuity Studios in the spring of 1991, and sometimes had conversations with Neal about Bob Haney. I naturally assumed that Bob was a mutual friend, Neal having drawn a number of Haney Batman stories for *Brave and Bold*. After a few of these conversations, details emerged that made me start to wonder if, indeed, he and I were talking about the same person at all. Sometime shortly thereafter, I became friends with Chris Pedrin, whose *Big Five*, the definitive catalogue of DC war comics, included a short autobiographical sketch from the Bob Haney who had written so many of the scripts for those comics... and for Batman as well. His stats did not in any way match those of the person I had known on the Upper West Side of New York. Suddenly questions arose that had never before been an issue. And they just grew and multiplied with time.

Chris kindly provided me with an address for Bob Haney, in Woodstock, New York. In the summer of 1995 I took the plunge and sent him a letter. At first I was delicate in my approach: I really was not sure whether I was actually writing to my friend Bob Haney or a stranger, and didn't think it would be very politic to be asking him outright if the guy I knew was, well, bogus. The reply I received to that first inquiry was a classic, typed on a faulty old "Smith Corona yard sale typewriter" (as he himself dubbed it) and displaying a vinegary spirit and Eastern self-reliance that endeared itself to me instantly. This may be a guy to whom I immediately took a liking, and it may well be the guy who wrote Batman stories, but there was no way on God's green earth this was the guy who drank whiskey with me and filled my library shelves with Arthur Rackham.

Replies from the "real" Bob Haney.

Woodstock, NY
7/25/95

Dear Tony Gleeson:

Your letter was, of course, pretty strange. As you have figured out, that other Bob Haney is not *moi*. Can I assume correctly that he had the same name? That you knew him as the bookstore prop., either saw his name written, or on a sign, check, etc.—whatever would nail down his legal name as same as mine? Okay. Assuming that, he is not this beat-up old ex-comics writer. And most likely no relation to me. Haney is not too common a name, but in a city the size of NY there were always a few in the phone book. But I can almost guarantee he is no relative.

...I'm sorry I can't give you any actual line on him or his life today...

Best,
Bob Haney (the real one)

Woodstock NY
8/15/95

Dear Tony G:

Thanks for your letter of 30 July. It put to rest most of my puzzlement and queries about your "friend," the other Bob Haney. From what you say I guess he did have the same name, with different middle initial, mine being "G" (for Gilbert, a family last name on my Scottish grandmother's side).

The Concert of Death? Sounds grim as hell. Wonder how that music was .

Best,
Bob Haney

It was at this point that I sent photocopies of the Howard the Duck story. His reply—"From: Bob Haney (the real, true, irrefutable one!)"—completed our mailing to one another. Unfortunately and to my regret, we have not communicated since. "Received note and stats," he wrote. "I suppose the final read-out on this dimension-X Haney is that such a guy did/does exist, and his name is probably Bob Haney with middle initial L. Mine is G. Yes, he obviously knew/knows plenty people in comics, these days probably more than I know."

A SHORT TIME LATER, AFTER HOWARD HAS RETRIEVED HIS FINALLY AWAKENED EGG FROM HIS DESK DRAWER, BOOKENDS THE TWO REASSEMBLES FOR THE FINAL FAREWELL ON THE STEVE GERBER STUDIO LOT...
THE KEY AWAY FROM COMETRON! THAT YOU HAVE WHILE YOU'RE MAKING AND INTO ANOTHER EGG! WHAT WILL MUCH RIGHT TO IT AFTER YOU GET BACK TO DUCK YOU DO WITH YOUR 21 YEARS?
WELL, HOWARD! YOU WON AND PROVED, BY YOUR LIFE, THAT YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO EXIST! I'LL BE BACK TO DUCK WORLD-X!
COMETRON
WAIT! I'VE SEEN INTO THE HEART OF THE KEY! MYSTERIOUS--WITNESSED ITS POWER! KEY! MYSTERIOUS--WITNESSED ITS POWER! BEWARE! THERE'S NO WAY TO THINK OF...
SHUCKS, I DON'T WANT TO BE A LITTLE WHITE ABOUT IT, BUT I WOULD'VE BEEN MORE ADVENTURE. DOESN'T ONE'S BELIEVE IN THOUGHT
THEN LET US GIVE THEM SOME THING BY WHICH TO BE REMEMBERED THIS DAY'S EVENTS. #1
HERE!
YEP, A CARD SHOWS YOU CARE, BUDDY!
A SIGN THEY CANNOT IGNORE, A SIGN THAT WILL BE IN THEIR MINDS FOR ALL TIME AS LONG AS THAT THE EARTH WAS SAVED FROM THE BATTLE TO DEFEND IT WAS FOUGHT...
A FITTING EPITAPH FOR OUR FALLEN FOE. HE WASN'T THAT BAD AFTER ALL. HE JUST DIDN'T REALLY EVIL
WELL, AH, I GUESS I'D BETTER BE GOING! BABY TO FEED AND I'S A LONG TIME!
NO, PLEASE! THAT'S ALL RIGHT! I PREFER HAVING ALL FOUR WHEELS ON THE GROUND!
AH, MY FEATHERED FRIEND... BUT I INSIST--!
WAIT, HOWARD! I BROUGHT YOU HERE BY MANIPULATING SPACE-TIME DISTANCES. I'LL SOONEST RIGHT THAT RETURN YOU TO OHIO IN THE SAME RUNNER
28

Page 28, the last comics appearance of R.L. Haney (?).

And so my short investigation into the Facts in the Case Concerning R. L. Haney came to a close in much the same place it had started. Or so I thought. It was only recently that I re-established contact with R. L. in the flesh, thanks to the Internet. Among many things we talked about, the story finally was told of how he had found himself in the pages of Howard.

"Bill Mantlo started out as a customer at Barqu," he told me. "As I understand it at some point he ran into the Sci-Fi writer Samuel R. 'Chip' Delany. I had been introduced to Chip several years earlier through another Hippie/Bohemian/Beat leftover. Chip had written a student film for the son of a wealthy art gallery owner. In the film were such persons as Frank Springer, Berni Wrightson, Al Weiss, Marie Severin and a bunch of others from the world of Marvel and DC, playing abstract parts. Chip had asked me to help do the lighting for the film. Much of the film was shot in the East village apartment of Denny O'Neil, the then premier writer/editor for DC. The film had nothing to do with the comic book world...matter of fact I'm not sure anyone including the author knew what the film was about..."

R. L. also touched upon how he saw the confusion about his role as the writer of Batman arising:

"One night when I had just moved into the city, I received a phone call very late at night. It was some lady looking for an old school chum named Bob Haney. Many of the things she rambled on about fell into my past history. So, not wanting to tell her I had no memory of who she was, I kept up my end while trying to figure out who she was. In actual fact it took about a full half hour, when she mentioned that her friend, when last heard of, was writing comic books. I then realized that I was not the person we thought I was...I had done a few scripts but as of this time had never published with anyone. This was my first hearing of a writer of that name."

"End Flashback... Now forward back to before the flash...

"Mantlo meets Chip. Chip mentions Denny. Next time Mantlo meets with Denny O'Neil, who was his editor at DC. Bill mentions Chip, which leads to Denny telling Bill about the film and mentions me. Bill, who knew the 'Bob Haney' name now puts two and four together and comes up with five. Next time he's in the store he has convinced himself that I am or was indeed that 'Bob Haney.'

"He starts hanging around the shop more often and we became friends. We spent some time outside the city with Denny O'Neil and girlfriends or wives. At no time did Denny mention that I was not 'Bob Haney' and I never stated that I was. But we all got along together well. About one year after this friendship started to grow, Bill started writing the 'H the D' scripts, I think he started with the newspaper strips and then when the format went to full black and white mag he started doing those. The 'Barqu/Haney' story appears in the March 1980 'Playduck' issue. As I recall Bill said it was a birthday surprise for me.

"(by the way I don't know if Gene remembers me or not but I do say hello.)

"That's how that came about...."

Upon reflection, the urgency of finding out the "real story" of my friend Bob Haney has disappeared, and what has become important to me is something far more real in my own life—the wonderful memories of footloose creative friends, marching to their own rhythms, who were loyal and generous and true to their chosen comrades, and only asked to be accepted for what they wished to be, and in return gave me great stories to tell and events impossible to forget. But the quest was not without its own value. In the process of my journey I encountered friends old and new, and had the opportunity to meet and converse with another charmingly remarkable man, the "real, irrefutable" Bob Haney—hopefully I will someday have the chance to meet him face to face. And because I took the trouble to look for him, I was able to re-establish a friendship with an old and very unique friend.

Meetings with remarkable individuals and unforgettable experiences. That, in the end, is the real truth that matters.

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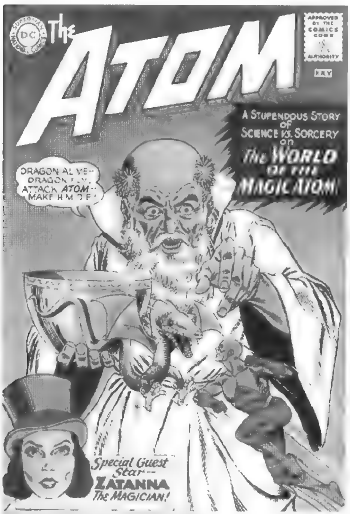
THE GREATEST COMIC BOOK EVER

[continued from page 9]

Placed center of the page, her arms are raised over each panel, and it seems to be suggested that, at the very least, she is observing the separate Hawks in action, if not controlling the action itself. The mystery of her identity continues as the story unfolds.

Hawkman and Hawkgirl, each on separate missions, encounter an immobile girl magician who seems to be speaking gibberish. Finding a faint heartbeat, each hero, independent of the other, decides to take the frozen mystery woman to their spaceship for evaluation. With the help of the amazing Absorbascon ("a remarkable electronic device that enables the Winged Wonders to gain all knowledge that is known on earth"), the two halves are made whole and we begin to learn the mysterious woman's origin.

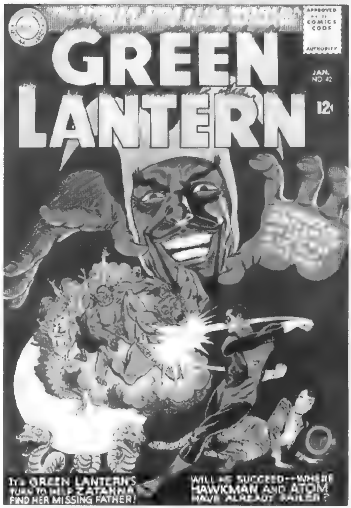

The ATOM
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
A STUPENDOUS STORY OF SCIENCE VS. SORCERY ON THE WORLD OF THE MAGIC ATOM!
DRAGON AL VE-DRAGON TO ATTACK ATOM-MAKE HIM STOP!
Special Guest Star— ZATANNA The MAGICIAN!

Atom #19 (Jun/Jul 1965), second appearance of Zatanna.

While secretly practicing crime fighting in between her stage engagements, Zatanna has been conducting an exhaustive search for her father, world famous Zatara the Magician, who has disappeared! Since her powers are magic-based, the Hawks now realize why the advanced science of Thanagar could not initially help Zatanna. In addition, her magic works in the most mysterious way. All she has to do to tap into the magic is to say the spell backwards.

Sey, sdrawckab.

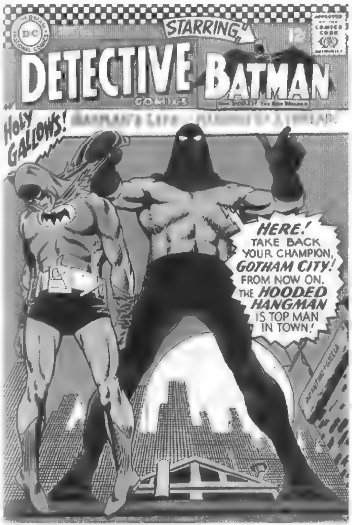
In her rush to find her father, Zatanna had not fully mastered his spells and accidentally split herself in two. While simultaneously visiting China and Ireland, she had become so weakened by the strain of effort, that all she could do was teleport an artifact from each location to the museum where the Hawks were working. Zatanna knew


GREEN LANTERN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JAN. NO. 42
12¢
IT'S GREEN LANTERN'S TURN TO HELP ZATANNA FIND HER MISSING FATHER!
WILL HE SUCCEED—WHERE HAWKMAN AND ATOM HAVE ALREADY FAILED?

Green Lantern #42 (Jan 1966), third appearance of Zatanna.

that the intellectual curiosity of the Hawks would bring them to where she stood frozen.

Zatanna'a own admission that she had not yet mastered her father's magic seems to make her a touch more human than the other heroes in DC at the time. It also made her seem just a bit younger than the others.


STARRING
DETECTIVE BATMAN
COMICS
Holy Gallows!
HERE! TAKE BACK YOUR CHAMPION, GOTHAM CITY! FROM NOW ON, THE HOODED HANGMAN IS TOP MAN IN TOWN!

Detective #355 (Sep 1966), fourth appearance of Zatanna (in an Elongated Man story).

I recently spoke with DC Editor Julie Schwartz about the first appearance of Zatanna and he didn't have any real clear memories of a big "company decision" to introduce the magician but he did clearly remember a conscious decision on the part of the editors to bring a girl into the ranks of the Silver Age DC heroes. It fell to Golden Age scribe Gardner Fox to make it complete.

This was not the last we see of Zatanna. Over the next two years her search for Zatara took her into (in order) *Atom* #19, *Green Lantern* #42, *Detective* #355 and finally *Justice League of America* #51. Schwartz had no real reason for the two-year long crossover other than editorial needs of the respective titles.

Forty years later, Zatanna is still reciting her spells backwards in the DC Universe. She has worked with everyone from Superman to Batman and is an active, important part of the magic community. She is currently working on the search for Aquaman over in the current run of *JLA*.

(*Hawkman* #4 had two stories that issue. After being introduced to Zatanna, the promised cover story thrills us with a great time travel twist. Criminals from the year 11,964 are finally caught and, as Hawkgirl points out in the last panel, since they are unable to return to the future, they will die before they are born.

Gardner Fox, genius.)

Justice League #51 (Feb 1967), fifth appearance of Zatanna.

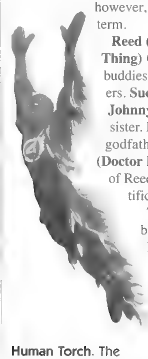
JUSTICE LEAGUE AMERICA
AS IN ZATANNA AND ZERO HOUR!
BATMAN LEADS THE JUSTICE LEAGUERS ON THE GREATEST MANHUNT OF ALL TIME!
SURPRISE GUEST STAR-- The ELONGATED MAN!

The First Family of Comics: The Fantastic Four

Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

First off, let me address the malcontents who will dispute the accuracy of the title of this installment. Fawcett's **Marvel Family** doesn't count. Their only relationship is the surname they share while in costume. The **Fantastic Four**, however, are a family in the true definition of the term.

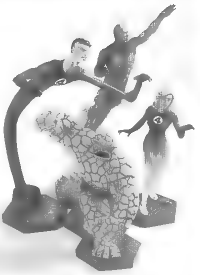


Human Torch. The second (and last) FF statue from Attakus.

Reed ("Mr. Fantastic") Richards and **Ben (The Thing) Grimm** were college roommates and army buddies long before they gained their super-powers. **Sue (Invisible Woman) Storm Richards** and **Johnny (Human Torch) Storm** are brother and sister. Reed and Sue are husband and wife. Ben is godfather to their son. Arch-nemesis **Victor (Doctor Doom) von Doom** was a college classmate of Reed, and his major rival in the realm of scientific research and experimentation.

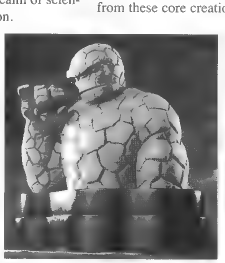
These genuine personal and blood relations render the Fantastic Four truly unique in a multiverse of homogenized characters. Other super-powered teams, no matter how closely they bond and operate together, are still not families in the true sense of the term.

And, as new FF scribe **Mark Waid** observed in the recently-released *Fantastic Four* Vol. 3 #60, the first issue of his run on the title, "These guys aren't superheroes...They don't fight crime. They don't go out on patrol...They're astronauts. They're envoys. Adventurers. Explorers. Sure, **Galactus** comes to town, they'll step up. Trouble finds them, they'll kick its ass." The FF has more in common with the **Challengers of the Unknown** (another product of FF co-creator **Jack Kirby**), than with the **Justice League** they were created to compete with.



The Fantastic Four. Group shot of all four pieces in Bowen's FF collection, released between 1999 and 2001.

In the course of their 40+ years as Marvel's first and flagship title, the FF has introduced many characters and concepts into the intricate fabric of the Marvel Universe. The **Skrulls**. The **Kree**. The **Watchers**. The **Inhumans**. The **Negative Zone**. The **Micro-Verse**. **Latveria**. **Attilan**. **Wakanda**. And countless more. All of these characters, places and concepts continue to recur throughout the **Marvel Universe** decades after their creation, as do others spun off from these core creations.



The Thing mini-bust.

Of the diversity of characters woven into the FF mythos, several have found their way into the third dimension of character statues, besides the core members of the FF themselves.

FF Triple Pack mini-bust set.

Invisible Woman (clear variant).

French company **Attakus** released a couple of pieces, the **Thing** and the **Human Torch** (as well as Kirby and Moebius versions of the **Silver Surfer**) in the mid-'90s as part of their short-lived Marvel license.

It wasn't until 1998 when **Bowen Designs** acquired the Marvel license that things really began to cook for the FF. First up in full-size statues was the 1999 release of Ben Grimm, the **Thing**. An immediate sell-out, the Thing statue breathed life, and an air of believability, into the blue-eyed "pile of lumpy orange rocks." For comparison, look at the caricature that is the Attakus rendition.

Next came the first-ever representation of Sue Richards, the **Invisible Woman**. In fact, Sue got two statues in her likeness. The first featured a "fade-away" paintjob that was fully painted above the waist, and faded to totally clear by mid-calf, depicting Sue in mid-transition to her namesake invisible state. The second was a clear variant with Sue in full invisible mode. And, yes, there was actually a fully sculpted clear resin statue mounted on the base; it wasn't an "Emperor's New Clothes" scenario.

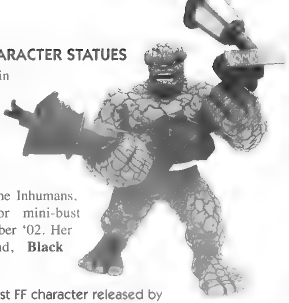
Team leader Reed **"Mister Fantastic"** Richards was the third subject in the series, depicted with legs, torso, neck and arms stretched and extended as he squeezes himself through a hole in the floor to join the rest of the group.

And finally, in 2001, came Johnny Storm, the **Human Torch**, launching skyward on a column of flame.

The Fantastic Four statues were planned from the outset as an **interlocking** group display, although each individually makes an impressive display.

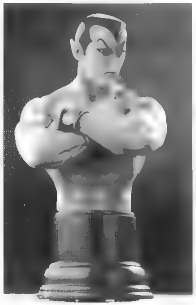
And meanwhile, as the metered release of the FF statues was under way, their supporting cast was not being ignored. Prior to the release of the Thing, fans and collectors were treated to the regally evil presence of **Doctor Doom**, standing defiantly on the parapet of his Latverian castle, cape billowing in the Balkan winds.

The rest of the FF cast sculpted by Bowen and his team appeared throughout the run of the mini-bust series. The **Mole Man**, with the distinction of being the first Marvel villain with his appearance in *FF* #1, was the tenth mini-bust. Prince Namor, the **Sub-Mariner**, the undersea monarch from Marvel's Golden Age predecessor Timely Comics, was reintroduced to readers in *FF* #4, and was inducted into the mini-bust ranks as #47 in the series. **Medusa**, (intro *FF* #36) of the hidden race the Inhumans, is scheduled for mini-bust release in December '02. Her eventual husband, **Black**



The Thing. The first FF character released by Attakus in the mid-'90s.

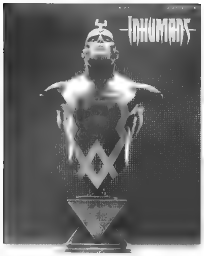
Mole Man. The very first Marvel villain, from FF #1.



Namor, the Sub-Mariner. Bill Everett's Golden Age hero was revived for a new generation in FF #4.

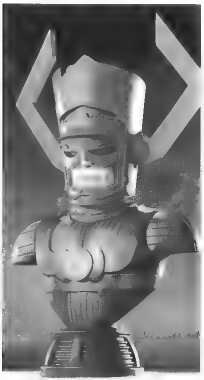
Doctor Doom. Ruler of the Balkan kingdom of Latveria, and arch-enemy of the FF, introduced in FF #5.

Medusa. Member of the Royal family of the Inhumans. Introduced in FF #36.

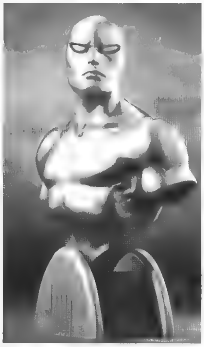


Black Bolt. Ruler of the hidden race known as the Inhumans, he first appeared in **FF** #46.

Black Panther. Ruler of the African kingdom of Wakanda, was introduced in **FF** #52.



Galactus. The planet-eater. The FF's "biggest" challenge.



Silver Surfer. Herald of the interplanetary menace called Galactus, he was introduced in **FF** #48.

Bolt (intro *FF* #46), ruler of the Inhumans, was mini-bust #13.

And speaking of monarchs (there seem to have been a lot of those throughout FF history), let us not forgot the **Black Panther** (intro *FF* #52), hereditary ruler of the African kingdom of Wakanda, immortalized as mini bust #12.

But of course, possibly the most awe-inspiring characters the pages of the Fantastic Four brought into the Marvel Universe are the fearsome planet-consuming **Galactus** and his herald, the **Silver Surfer**. Introduced in the epic trilogy featured in *FF* #48-50, no characters in the pantheon have had quite the lasting impact and resonance as this star-faring duo. The reasons are topics for another place (if you don't know already); our subject here is character statues.

Galactus landed as mini-bust #45. The Silver Surfer followed as #50. Additionally, Bowen released a very-limited edition chrome-plated variant of the Silver Surfer mini-bust at the WizardWorld 2002 convention in Chicago, selling out all 500 pieces in around two hours. Within a week, these were selling on eBay in the mid-$400s.

For peripheral involvement, we have mini-bust #43, Luke Cage, **Power Man**. Cage was a temporary member of the FF for several months in the mid-'70s, while the Thing was de-powered and off active duty.

The curtain is soon to close on Bowen's Marvel license, but there's still one more FF item in the pipeline before the end. As a companion to the Thing mini-bust released early this year (#44 in the series), soon to come is the **Fantastic Four Triple-Pack**, a box set including the rest of the core team (collectively listed as mini-bust release #63).

It's sad to see the run end. So many interesting FF-related characters as-yet unsculpted. The Watcher. Adam Warlock. Dragon Man. Triton. Gorgon, Karnak, Crystal, and Lockjaw of the Inhumans. The Super-Skrull. Attuma. Klaw. Annihilus. The list goes on; we've all got our favorites. While others take up the gauntlet of the Marvel license, their representations of the Marvel characters will be *different*, outside the unified Bowen style. The display just would not mesh cohesively.

Luke Cage, **Power Man**. Cage filled in for the de-powered Thing for several months in the mid-'70s.

Let's just hope those who follow do justice to comics' First Family.

The Michael Naiman Report

Movies, Variants, WonderCon & Restoration

Thanks to Mike Dalessandro for giving me the "heads up" about a nifty little flick that is definitely worth the rental. By the time this column is out—30 or so days after I write it—**Comic Book Villains** will have been available to view for about two months.

The film stars Donal Logue (Blade), Michael Rappaport (Boston Public), Cary Elwes (The Princess Bride), D.J. Qualls (Road Trip, The New Guy), Natasha Lyonne (American Pie), Danny Masterson (That 70s Show) and character actress Eileen Brennan.

The subject matter and premise is tantalizing to anyone who has ever collected. Two competing small town comic storeowners hear of a possible "pedigree collection" that might be available because of the death of its owner. The lengths they go to secure this treasure trove are all too familiar.

I sat down to watch this with The Woman In My Apartment. She's been to the San Diego show for about an hour. Doesn't care about collecting—no interest in the hobby—but does like The Simpsons animation cels. So, not entirely a lost cause.

I knew that this would be a difficult watch for her.

As the film began to unfold, I turned to her and interjected some annotated explanations of what the characters were discussing. It was very disturbing when I was met with that Deer In The Headlights Stare which indicated a complete lack of caring or interest. I was crushed.

After about 20 minutes she exclaimed, "How could people be like that? These people are disgusting. How can you watch this? There's nothing funny going on here!"

And with that, got up to do the dishes. Apparently, that was more stimulating.

As she walked away I pleaded in my best Big Bopper voice. "But, but, but Baaaaby, these are My People!

"Your People? What type of weirdos and pervs do you associate with?" she retorted.

"I'm not like that…(Gulp!)….*Honestly!*"

And with that I settled in for an undisturbed viewing. OK, there's a bit of violence and coarse language but writer/director James Robinson (Starman) knows his subject matter thoroughly enough to satisfy even the most hardcore fanboy.

The film's underlying greed and envy (the lifeblood of too many folks in the hobby), is certainly a character in this little film. However, there's enough variety here to hold your attention for the 93-minute tour of The Dark and Wild Side of the Industry.

I imagine that The Woman In My Apartment will not be sitting through Unbreakable with me.

Thanks go to the unflagging research of Doug Sulipa and collector Byron Glass for the latest list of **Whitman Variants** of DC Comics. Confirmed to exist are: Action: 481-483, 485-492, 495-498, 501-505, 507-508; All-New Collectors' Edition C-56; Batman: 306-308, 311-317, 319-320, 323-324, 326; Brave and Bold: 145-147, 150-159, 165; DC Presents: 1-4, 9-12, 14-16, 19, 21-22; Famous First Edition C-61; Flash: 268, 273-276, 278, 283, 286; Green Lantern: 117-119, 121; JLA: 158, 160-162, 168-169, 171-173, 176-179, 181; Legion: 261, 263-264, 266; New Adventures of Superboy: 1-2, 5-6, 8; Sgt. Rock 329; Superboy & Legion: 244-248, 251-258; Super Friends: 13-16, 20-23, 25, 32; Superman: 321-323, 325-327, 329-332, 335-345, 348, 350; Wonder Woman: 250-252, 255-262, 264.

The new **Overstreet Grading Guide** should prove to be an interesting addition to the hobby. Many new investors, collectors and speculators have entered the hobby since the first edition was published in 1992 (that long ago?). The grading scale will be

different, certainly—I'll miss the 100-point way of grading. An improvement will surely be the addition of color and scanned photos. Today's technology was just not available ten years ago (Thank You Captain Obvious!). The restoration definitions will hopefully be clear and concise. I'm thinking that one of the offshoots of the new Grading Guide will be that collectors will be able to acquire erudition without study, authority without cost, and judgment without effort. Who knows, maybe collectors can hold artistic discussions and exchange the same sentences from the same paragraph? Time will tell.

Early Daredevil issues continue to show plenty of upward movement with the movie due out soon. The speculator bandwagon is off and running with a ferocity that hasn't been seen since the last Marvel movie! But since Spider-Man certainly has more legs (ouch!) than Daredevil it remains to be seen if DD can hold on as an investment vehicle.

The spring time comic book conventions will have a newly reset jewel in its crown when **WonderCon** moves from Oakland to the Mosconi Center (April 25-27th, 2003) in San Francisco. This annual April celebration will have touch of class that Oakland just cannot offer. Babylon by the Bay offers everything a true fanboy could desire. The appeal of the venue should attract special guests and artists that will add immensely to the programming.

Is it time to develop a new pricing system for those **Restored** Golden Age books that are ever so rapidly deteriorating as we hold them? Is it time for the collector to understand that a slight color touch, tear seal, or staple repair might not be the end of the world? Should *preservation* for the next generation be one of the responsibilities of all collectors? Just how many copies of Action #1, Detective #27, Marvel Comics #1, Superman #1, All-American #16, Batman #1, Captain America #1, Flash #1 and Whiz #2 (#1) really exist? Sure, these books do not currently bring a big price, but it is time to educate the collecting community about the benefits of some types of preservation/restoration. Before you go to your next convention, ask the programming chairman to schedule a restoration specialist to give a talk. A small step, but one that should be taken.

I'd like to start collecting sales data information from those of you who regularly buy and sell restored books. Let's see what type of marketplace really exists today. Email me at the usual place. Until next time!

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CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Action
#223 GD $31 86%
#236 VG $31 43%
#237 VG $46 46%
#240 VG $45 64%
#253 VG $48 51%

All Winners
#2 GD $455 1.02X

All-American Men Of War
#6 FN $43 42%
#7 VG $34 50%
#8 FN $28 27%
#9 FN $43 42%

Amazing
#1 GD $225 1.12X

Amazing Spider-Man
#24 VF- $125 74%
#45 VF $60 68%
#59 VF $42 65%
#64 VF+ $38 76%

Atomic Attack
#7 NM- $160 68%

Avengers
#14 NM- $180 1.12X

Black Terror
#20 FN- $130 92%

Blackhawk
#35 VG $34 44%
#80 VF $43 33%

Blue Beetle
#16 GD- $39 93%

Blue Bolt
#V2 #6 FN $25 1.09X
#V2 #7 FN $25 1.25X
#V5 #2 FN $17 83%

Captain Marvel Jr.
#76 FN $53 Guide
#96 FN $38 70%

Captain America (GA)
#15 FN $428 43%
#18 GD $303 Guide
#43 GD $171 1.04X
#58 FN $305 79%
#73 FR $200 2.32X

Conan
#1 VF+ $122 73%
#1 VG $38 79%
#2 VG $25 1.56X
#3 NM $150 86%
#3 VF $51 50%
#4 NM- $40 57%

Daredevil
#1 FN $405 85%
#1 GD $305 1.92X
#1 VG $250 79%
#2 VF $242 67%
#2 VF- $178 50%
#2 VG $105 1.16X
#5 VF $160 1.14X
#5 VF- $86 61%
#12 VF- $31 58%
#13 NM $111 1.30X
#16 VG $87 4.35X

Defenders
#10 NM- $40 Guide

Fantastic Four
#1 FN $500 21%
#2 VG $466 84%
#2 VG $278 50%
#3 GD $228 1.21X
#4 GD $244 1.13X
#5 GD $208 89%
#8 FN $200 93%
#9 VG $150 1.04X
#12 VG $272 1.28X
#25 FN $175 1.57X
#48 NM $1,026 82%
#48 VG $178 1.14X
#56 VF $40 80%
#58 NM $162 1.90X
#Annual FN $162 91%

Frankenstein Monster
#1 VF $30 Guide
#6 NM $12 66%

Green Lantern (SA)
#5 FN $163 1.75X
#40 VF+ $125 36%
#59 FN $65 1.08X

Hand of Fate
#21 VG $36 75%

Human Torch
#9 GD $165 78%
#11 VG $236 70%
#19 GD $99 84%
#4 (3) GD $321 80%

Impact
#2 FN+ $30 Guide

Incredible Hulk
#116 NM- $31 69%

Jimmy Olsen
#14 VG $45 90%
#26 FN- $40 83%

More Fun
#38 VG+ $600 1.2X

Mystic (1st series)
#9 GD $455 2.08X

Mystic (2nd series)
#1 GD $249 1.1X

Our Army At War
#34 VG $31 87%
#77 VF $44 57%
#80 VG $10 45%

Our Fighting Forces
#1 FN $168 69%
#1 VG $80 49%
#3 VG $53 80%
#13 VF $43 35%
#14 VF $44 36%

Phantom Witch Doctor
#1 VG- $80 89%

Sgt. Fury
#13 FN $38 41%

Strange Tales
#97 FN $158 1.42X
#101 VG $175 1.07X
#110 FN $209 70%
#115 VG $152 1.85X

Sub-Mariner (GA)
#1 GD $2,126 90%
#17 FN $232 61%

Superman
#114 FN- $56 53%
#118 FN $80 76%
#119 VG $31 44%
#121 FN $73 81%
#122 FN $91 Guide
#123 VG $39 56%
#124 VF $96 60%
#125 FN $70 77%
#129 FN $46 51%
#132 FN $30 43%
#146 VF $152 1.20X
#147 VF $76 66%
#148 VF $47 47%
#167 VG $32 1.77X
#188 VF $30 75%

Tales To Astonish
#1 VG $288 1.10X
4 FN $75 58%
#13 FN $87 1.12X
#31 FN $81 1.42X
#35 VG $81 33%
#44 FN $81 87%
#50 VF $80 1.09X
#54 VF $68 93%
#60 VF $50 40%
#76 NM $55 Guide

Tarzan
#100 NM- $32 58%

Tomb of Dracula
#2 NM $60 Guide
#8 NM $35 Guide

Tough Kid Squad
#1 FR $351 76%

Voodoo
#14 FN $81 Guide

War Is Hell
#9 NM $45 Guide

Weird Chills
#3 VG+ $100 1.06X

Weird Science
#14 FN $101 1.08X

Weird War Tales
#1 FN $45 68%

Whiz
#69 VG $48 89%
#124 VG $16 33%

Wonder Woman
#106 VG+ $50 1.19X

World's Finest
#84 GD $33 44%

X-Men
#1 VG+ $610 54%
#1 VG $611 54%
#2 VG $305 1.05X
#8 FN+ $100 1.06X
#10 FN+ $100 Guide
#10 VF $78 31%
#12 VF $110 43%
#13 FN+ $90 1.07X
#19 NM $112 59%
#24 NM $104 69%
#28 NM $119 56%
#94 NM $500 56%
#94 VF $180 37%
#94 FN+ $154 91%

MARKET REPORTS

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Seeing as my customers come to me for the more **offbeat, obscure books**, I don't have much to report in the way of mainstream super-hero books. But, if you are looking for tidbits of info on the type of books that you don't run across all too often, you're in the right place. The books I specialize in are those that somehow seem to slip under the radar of most collectors. There are lots of bargains to be had and discoveries to be made by venturing outside the box of "Hot" books.

There are many excellent alternatives to the latest fad in comics. For example, how about Air Ace V3 #8 (a **Gerber White-Space**, by the way)? This book has the great story, "Atom Bomb Over Bikini," that has not one but two beautiful full-page atomic bomb explosions. As if that wasn't enough to get the atomic collectors salivating, there are also a couple panels of beautiful topless native girls watching the explosion in awe. Or how about Charlton's Marvels of Science #1? Other than the A-Bomb story listed in Overstreet there is also a Hitler appearance *and* a few crazy panels of a disembodied dog head kept alive by "modern" technology.

Collect **variants**? Give Classic Comics/Classics Illustrated a look. There are enough variants in that series to make your head spin and keep you searching for years. By the way, looking for a Marvel variant that everybody else doesn't have? Try to find an Oscar #26 (#3). There is a veritable goldmine of discoveries yet to be uncovered in comics. The clincher is *you have to actually open them up and read them to find what's inside!*

Recent **comic sales**: Holyoke One-Shot #4 GD with an unlisted Cat Man story from Crash Comics #5 $20; Racket Squad in Action #5 VF with one of the headlightiest headlight covers around $78; someone got a deal with a VF+ Blue Beetle #41 at $62; Space Western #44 VF another bargain at $152; Super DC Giant S-17 Love (1970) FN+ $103, a stunning Super DC Giant S-21 Love (1971) (much harder to find than the earlier issue) $405; St. John All Picture Adventure #1 (100 pgs) VF $179; a high grade run of Battle of the Planets #3-10 $256; The Flame (Ajax) #5 (#1) VG $202, #2 FN $114, #3 GD+ $52; Flying Cadet #17 (V2 #7) with the topless cover VF for an amazing multiple-Guide $243; St. John Giant Comics Edition #15 VF- with a gorgeous Matt Baker cover and interior artwork went for a bargain price of $227; It's Fun to Stay Alive giveaway NM+ $119; Hoppy the Marvel Bunny #1 VF $197; and an absolutely gorgeous VF+ Jon Juan #1 with cover to cover Schomburg went for a devilish $666.

A few **non-comic sales**: Avengers #4 Golden Record Comic set NM with Marvelmania flyer $189; a Ditko page from Rom #70 $103; and a 1959 Mad Forever hardback in un-improvable NM++ $207.

Recent **purchases**: One of my Holy Grails, It Rhymes With Lust, the 1950 St. John digest by Matt Baker; a Dell "Told in Pictures" comic paperback "Four Frightened Women;" a beautiful run of one-owner Classic Comics, including #43 Great Expectations, two Illustrated Stories of the Operas and an unlisted comic magazine, Record Comics, that parodied Superman (Supergoon), Blondie (Bleachie), Flash Gordon (Flush Gordon) and lots more three years before MAD came onto the scene; a nice Cocomalt Big Book of Comics from 1938; and a beautiful 1939 Merry Christmas from Sears Toyland giveaway.

And not a mainstream book in the bunch! If you're ever in the mood to try something different give some of the overlooked genres and publishers a try. You definitely will not be disappointed! Remember, unless you actually **crack that slab** and pull back the cover you might just never know what new discovery you hold in your hands. I am always in the mood to talk offbeat comics so if you are ever so inclined feel free to give me a call or fire an email my way.

Ted Van Liew
Superworld
LVanliew@aol.com

Greetings fellow collectioners! It's been a **very active year**, despite the supposedly soft economy. Comics are too cool to be put on the back burner! As always, high-grade Silver Age leads the way. There's always a customer for high-end "investment" grade books. And there are legions of collectors who want affordable books in various grades, either to fill runs or just to have a variety of cool books, or just to read 'em (heaven forbid!). Marvels remain the most popular area by far. The DCs are very charming, and some have a great deal of imagination, but they don't get the respect they deserve in general. Finding a '50s or '60s DC in high grade is ten times tougher than finding a Marvel.

Oh, well, keep the customer satisfied! Marvels from the '70s are exploding in popularity. Some DCs, though not all, are following suit.

Anything with Neal Adams art is good. Any key or first appearance is hotly sought after. The nice thing about **Bronze Age** is that exceptional copies of books are still available some of the time, and it's just very exciting to lay your eyes on books that still look almost like new. Spidey still leads in popularity, movie or no movie, and that's not gonna change. **Daredevil** has been making a lot of noise lately though, probably because of anticipation of the movie due this fall. The Frank Miller issues, especially #158 (first Miller) and 168 (first Elektra), are off the scales right now! Bullseye appearances are popular too.

Golden Age just moves along steadily. Most Timelys sell briskly, as always. Mainstream DCs are good, as they are so recognizable to most people now that there's always a large crowd looking to collect them. Books from MLJ, Prize Pubs, Better/Nedor, and Avon are very sought after because of their coolness and extreme scarcity. Fox, Centaur, Quality, Fiction House, and some others have a steady group of collectors who are seduced by the aura and mystique of these books, some of which have the best art of the Golden Age.

Some sales: Daredevil #168 CGC NM 9.4 $250; Showcase #58 VF+ $195; Green Lantern #76 NM- $450, #85 NM/NM+ $110; Fantastic Four #61 NM $125; Jungle Comics #99 VF $145; Superman #89 VF/NM $325; Sgt Fury #13 VF $230; Cap #100 NM $750; Marvel Mystery #25 VG+ $450; Mystery Men #9 GD/VG $117

Jamie Graham

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I can definitely say that 2002 has been an **excellent year** for selling comics. Between the sales in our nine stores and at all the shows we have done, up through and including San Diego, it has been a great year for selling. Buying is another thing. (If only San Diego would consider us dealers as important to the success of the show as the small press area and guests.) Prices are escalating on Marvel Silver keys (as you would expect).

I expect DCs to start to move. DCs haven't been selling much at all for me (with the exception of '70s DCs like Adams Bats and Adams GL/GA). And as for those who follow trends, as one company picks up steam and the prices rise, that makes the other company (usually DC) begin to look more attractive, then books start to move and prices rise. Then Timelys/Marvels start to look more attractive—and then they rise.

The only thing that isn't affected by this cycle is **restored books**. They only seem to gain interest when demand starts to exceed supply—and collectors turn to the books that are most inexpensive—especially higher-priced keys. They want to own these books and can get a copy at bargain prices—until everyone jumps on the bandwagon. However, that cycle doesn't seem to repeat much more than every eight years or so

I feel that we are back to a normal cycle in this industry. Comics interest and collecting is rising. I also feel that this cycle is also abnormal because of the number of books sold and in such a small segment. Primarily Marvel keys and semi-keys, Marvel high grade (any), Timelys and publishers other than DC and Fawcett.

SALES: Marvel #1 CGC 7.5 apparent $17,000; All Flash #7, 22, 24, 26, 27 between 3.0/4.0 $115 each; Detective #44 FN $500; Action #15 GD- $450, #31 VG+ $240, #38 GD- $125, #52 GD+ $175; Batman #23 GD+ $175; Planet #53 CGC 7.5 $345; Superman #9 GD $350, #10 FN- $550, #28 VG+ $140; USA #17 FN- $275; Cap America #58 GD+ $350; Human Torch #9 GD- $225, #9 VG $650; All Top #10 FN+ $550, Atomic Bomb 1945 VG+ $150; All Star #26 fr $45.

With the news about layoffs and strikes and bankruptcies you would think that home sales would drop and comics sales would too—but they aren't. Another fact about comics always used to be that in a recession comics sales (cheap entertainment and a collectible) used to rise. After, of course, gold and other metals. Well, are we going into one? Let's hope it doesn't happen!

Tom Gordon

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CGC-graded comics are continuing to sell well overall. Some books are down from their sky-high sale prices of the past year. We are seeing many CGC 9.4 and better selling at strong prices. We are also seeing a number of collectors purchasing books in the 9.0 to 9.4 range at what some collectors have called bargain prices. By purchasing in this range some collectors have commented that they can afford to buy more for their money. Amazing Spider-Man has backed off some from its pre-movie prices but still sells steady. Daredevil and Incredible Hulk have been selling very well as people anticipate the upcoming movies.

Platinum Age comics continue to sell when available. This material is scarce and if you find it, chances are good that finding another will be difficult. We have been looking high and low for quality examples of this material and will continue to do so. Platinum Age collectibles also sell well when available. Items range from statues to sheet music of characters of

the era including Buster Brown, The Brownies, Yellow Kid and more.

Golden Age comics are selling well in various grades with Fine or better selling steadily. Timelys continue to be high on want lists regardless of condition. Main titles of DC and Fawcett are also selling well. Some collectors have given up purchasing high-grade Golden Age and are instead purchasing these books in mid-grade. Some have cited the increases in the costs of purchasing as the cause. We are constantly being asked for Golden Age books with patriotic covers and classic covers.

Silver Age comics are selling well in all grades overall. Lower grades under Fine condition need to be slightly discounted unless a key issue. High-grade copies continue to sell for easily Guide and above as they surface for sale.

Bronze Age keys and variants continue to have strong demand. We are almost always being asked for variant books from this era. These include the price variants and also the Mark Jeweler issues. Lower grade copies of books from this era sell fairly well when discounted.

Character Toys and Premiums continue to sell very well. High-grade and scarce unusual items are selling well overall. Many of the mid-range to common items continue to sell well if fairly priced. We have seen an increase in demand for these items shortly after the release of the new **Hake's Price Guide to Character Toys**. This guide serves as a great wish book for many collectors.

Greg White

Comics and Collectibles
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Welcome to autumn in Central Florida. Still hot & humid. Sales have been **steady** if not spectacular. Silver Age DC still leads the way. The lower grade books sell well while the more expensive high-grade copies have a problem finding a home due to higher cost—most collectors simply cannot afford books in the $500 and up range.

As usual we have had to **discount** certain titles and groups of comics. As I have stated in the past, the overall price structure still needs to lower in order to improve across-the-board sales. And please—don't even mention the silly multiples being paid for slabbed books. Someday those guys will wake up! I have had fewer in-store sales recently as more buyers turn to eBay to satisfy their needs. If this trend continues the future is bleak for retail comic stores that specialize in pre-1980 comic book sales. If you want to have the option of visiting a shop and sifting through thousands of old comics then you had best support your local comic store that deals in pre-1980 comic books.

SILVER AGE 1955-1969: DCs in the good-to-fine range moved well this month. Batman, Green Lantern, Flash and JLA sold well. We were also able to purchase a 1960s Marvel collection that included most super-hero books from late 1963 to 1969; a mid-grade group that will help to fill out our Marvel selection. Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey and other similar brands are slow as usual.

SALES: Tales of Suspense #48 VG $60, Amazing Spider-Man #9 VG $150; Fantastic Four #11 GD $50; Batman #119 VG $50; Strange Tales #45 VG $50; Detective #231 GD $40; Flash #105 GD $300; Green Lantern #2 VG $125; JLA #2 GD $75; Amazing Spider-Man #14 GD $125.

GOLDEN AGE 1935-1955: Not much activity this month. We picked up a run of early Comic Cavalcade but that was about it. Most collectors cannot afford the better Golden Age comics. Demand was light this month. I am seeing more and more restored books from this period. As I have previously stated we really need to address this issue with a price listing and general information in the next Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. Not all books would be listed—let's start with key popular issues and go from there. The time has come.

SALES: Batman #47 GD $175; Thrilling #58 VG $30; World's Finest #8 GD $200; Superman #11 FN $500; Action #19 FN $1250; Four Color #16 FN $950.

ART, TOYS & DISNEYANA: We bought a large Disneyana collection this month. Lots of early Disney and TV items and 1940s-1950s cartoon and movie pieces. These items have always had a good sales record for us—we should do well with this group. Demand continues for 1960s TV and comic character toys. We do not see as much of this material as we could use. We did get in the 1965 Aurora Man From U.N.C.L.E. model kits. I also get requests for original art but have had little offered to me in recent months. We are ripe for a quality vintage collection.

SALES: Man From U.N.C.L.E. Aurora kit in box $300; Disneyland 1957 guidebook $30; Flintstones Dino cel $30; Capt Action doll loose $75.

That will wrap up our month. Have a great autumn! When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello!

Rod Henley

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(eBay user samson2402)

The **Australian** comic book market place is dominated by US Marvel and DC comics. Ebay has opened up the market to a large number of collectors and old Australian-published comics are demanding high prices.

Always popular is The Phantom, which has been published continuously by Frew for over 50 years. The earliest examples from Woman's Mirror magazine have been offered at prices over AU $1000.

Disney comics were published in Australia from the '40s to the late '70s when the distribution resorted to Whitman comics. These Australian-published Disneys contained reprint, and often cut down, US content. But the longer-running series are popular with the small band of local collectors and early issues are much sought after and bringing high prices.

Barry's Collectors Corner

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It is interesting to note that some comics that I used to sell in the **25-cent box** are now hot collectibles. The Banana Splits, H.R. Pufnstuff and Scooby Doo are now steady sellers. Older Atlas Westerns always sell when I can find them. Westerns in general are steady, with Roy Rogers in most any condition selling well. Lone Ranger s not quite as good as Roy's and Gene Autry is much harder to move. I have been selling Silver Age DC humor like Sugar and Spike, Jerry Lewis and Bob Hope. Other Dell/GK sales lately nclude a Good copy of Astro Boy for $65 that went to Asia, and Space Family Robinson #1 at $40.

The new Transformer series has generated strong sales of the old Marvel series with steady sales of most middle-grade copies at $2-$4. Reasonably priced Amazing Spider-Man numbered between 20-100 are steady. Most of my customers are looking for reading copies in Good to Fine condition. I get an occasional customer looking for higher-grade comics, thinking I don't know what is happening with comics grading services. To those customers I say, "Sorry, most of my comics are for reading!" If I had something so fabulous that I wanted it graded, I would send it in myself.

Al Stoltz

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Esoteric was our key to success at this summer's **San Diego Comic Con**. We sold books that were outside the Silver Age hero genre but still on the serious collectors wish list. A few that we can remember off hand are: a decent Punch #12 went on set-up day along with Captain Marvel Jr #115 and #119, both which are tough to get in Good. We also sold an All-Negro #1 on Saturday at the show. This super-scarce book is a Gerber 9 and made a collector and his girlfriend very happy. A Weird Tales of The Future #2 went to a West Coast buyer and seemed to make his day, Wolverton still has plenty of fans.

The coolest book we sold to a collector was a **Martin Luther King** softcover giveaway comic that has a ten-cent price on the cover. We then received another copy back from CGC graded a 9.2 and had lots of interest in that as well; a very interesting comic that was made either in the late '50s or early '60s.

Dells and Four Colors in general seemed to be on want lists as long as they were in Fine or better. Has the public finally realized what treasures these books are and that they are also hard to get in grade? Westerns also seemed to be in high demand in the sunny coast. Have Gun Will Travel was the most requested TV western after Gene Autry, I guess having a museum in the same state does not hurt demand for that title.

Timely comics did sell as usual but a new run of Fawcetts we picked up did not do as well and it seemed a shame no one out there is looking for Captain Marvels and Marvel Families as hard as they should be. We traded a Batman #1 in low grade for some great new books for our customers and spent money in piles for lots of new items that will make many a customer on this side of the country happy in return.

Silver Age was a little slow for us at this show, perhaps due to our less than desirable location that we received this year at the show. Our location never had the buyers pouring down our aisle and you need foot traffic near you to facilitate digging and poking in the boxes to produce sales for that material. We did manage to move a high-grade X-Men #10, Defenders #10 and a very nice Daredevil #168 off the wall in our booth.

Last of the summer shows, and true to form it was well worth the effort and time that is required to do this major event.

Daniel Greenhalgh

Showcase New England
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Greetings from southern New England. The market continues to be dominated by **Marvels** where Spidey still paves the way. CGC-graded copies in high grade are extremely liquid, really about the same as cash. As a consequence, the margin on these books continues to thin out, making it harder and harder to make money. Further, it is getting more difficult to get premiums for unslabbed books in high grades. Ultimately, these changing conditions are good for the overall heath of the market as interested third party observers can analyze exchanges with more regularity, transparency and, consequently, less uncertainty.

Ungraded copies of Spidey sell well and at near Guide prices. X-Men and early issues of FF are strong as well. Daredevil and Avengers are the laggards.

DCs are generally anemic and have pretty much been so the entire year, particularly on eBay. The exception is, of course, very high-grade, slabbed DCs. I find the spread amazing on, for example, a Superman #238 in 9.4 (unslabbed) at around $40 while its slabbed counterpart is around $500. By my math that is roughly 12 to 1. Once you get away from high-grade material, however, just forget it. Even early VFs from the late '50s and early '60s from titles like JLA, Green Lantern and Flash sell for 40% to 50% of Guide.

It seems as if the value of **Marvels** is increasing at the expense of just about all other titles and publishers—almost without exception. It is very safe to assume that there are many more Marvel collectors than there are DC collectors (and, perhaps, all other publishers and titles combined), especially in view of the fact that Marvels are significantly more common than DCs (as a rule of thumb).

Mainstream, **Golden Age DC** titles are also slow and sell well only when discounted quite heavily off Guide. This is also borne out by results from the major auction houses. My theory here is that as books become more expensive, investors/collectors are becoming more sensitive to the future values of their holdings. If you listen to the market carefully (OK, maybe not so carefully) I think it is telling us that you are better of with $10,000 invested in a high-grade Spidey #2 than you are in a high-grade Batman #2 or Superman #2, even if they are slabbed.

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Another very **busy summer**. I managed to take two weeks off, but now have spent six weeks trying to get caught up. Predictions of Gloom & Doom for the comics as a collectible market have now circulated for 25 years. But the market continues to Grow & Thrive. The Internet has certainly helped in this regard. After 40 years as a solid collectible, I think this hobby will be around for a long time to come.

There was a rash of people selling material recently and that too has kept me busy. This often happens upon the release of the new **Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide**. People's eyes widen when they see their items go up in price. Naturally, they always focus on the NM prices. Many fans assume that just because they bought their comics new, 20-40 years ago, they are all in NM 9.4 or better today. By today's Overstreet standards this is just not true, by CGC standards even less so. The first sign that the seller does not understand grading is when they grade most of their items NM and NM+; red flags always go up with any seller, dealer or collector that uses the term Mint to describe what they have. Many buyers routinely avoid any seller that uses the term Mint, as trying to explain to them amid the disappointment is just too much effort. It usually turns out they have read their comics a few times, that they did not select the best available copies on new release day and they were not stored properly. Thus it turns out most of these collections are relatively common VF average copies. Absurd as it is, due mostly to CGC, VF is no longer considered a "high-grade investment" comic for Silver and Bronze collectors!

The **bridge in value** between VF 8.0 and NM 9.4 continues to widen. Many fans already do not comprehend how strict a 9.4 is, and now Overstreet plans on making grading yet stricter with his new **Grading Guide**. Among today's biggest bargains are the true strict VF 8.0 thru VF/NM 9.0 comics. The current prices on 9.4 and better is so high that there is not much room to move. In fact, many CGC prices have declined on over-slabbed items. Yet VF copies that can be had near Guide can easily rise in value over the buyer's cost.

Because of our new Website, we have found a lot of new buyers of late. **Western** comics were hot in the last three months. Lone Ranger's Famous Horse Hi-Yo Silver is selling well lately, perhaps because fans discovered that Lone Ranger appears in most issues. As usual, there is resistance to all western graded and priced in above-FN condition. In fact all Dell, TV, TV cartoon and character comics have been on the rise in demand.

We came across some very rare Golden Age **Canadian Giants**, all circa 1950 with USA comics' contents, many previously unknown. They included Best Variety Comics Vol.1 #1 (132 pages of Thrilling Western Stories, Hawk, Redskin, Buffalo Bill); Big Giant Comics #5 (164 pages of Fawcett Western contents); Big Holiday Comics #NN (180 pages of Joe College, Romantic Story, Hockey Comic, Sweethearts); Big Holiday Comics #2 (164 pages of Science Comics, Fawcett, Hillman and Export contents); Christmas Comics #NN (ACG Funny Animal and Love, Deadeye Western and Bill Boyd); Colossal Comics (132 pages comprising #2 (Marvel/Atlas contents) and #4 and 8 (both all Marvel/Atlas Westerns)); Giant Album Big-Time Cowboys #NN (1950; 132 pages of Haunt of Fear #17, 2 Fox comics with Women Outlaws and 1 Marvel/Atlas); Romance Comic Album #NN (100 pages of 2 Fox and 1 Crime); Thrills Comics Inc. (February 1951; 164 pages of Jackie Robinson, Hopalong Cassidy, Phantom and Cookie); Variety Comics #2 (Simon

and Kirby-a; 148 pages of Casper, Young Love, Sparkler); and, finally, an unlisted Non-Giant, Name-It Comics #1 (Nov/Dec 1941; 52 pages of Cosmo (Buck Rogers-swipe SF Hero)).

The single hottest items currently are **Daredevil** comics by Frank Miller with Bullseye or Elektra. Obviously people are anxiously awaiting the film. They have noted the current low prices on most vintage Daredevil comics, especially when compared to Spider-Man! DD #168 is easily in highest demand, with unslabbed copies bringing 150% Guide with ease! CGC 9.6 copies of DD #168 easily bring $500+; DD #158 is popular too, but #168 is where the Miller scripts began, thus is considered much more important and more key! The cover colors and many print flaws on #168 make a True NM extra tough to find! Most original-owner copies are only VF to VF+ copies!

Watch out for DD #131, 132, 141 and other **Bullseye** appearance issues. We can easily get 200%-400% current low Guide prices for unslabbed copies in high grade! Expect #131 to skyrocket in value! Even the first appearance of the original Bullseye in Nick Fury #15 has awoken from the dead box!

The second hottest category has been the **Skywald** B&W mags Nightmare, Psycho and Scream. We also discovered a new Skywald title: King—"The Magazine for the Man's Man". It is a square bound B&W men's exploitation magazine containing text stories and illustrations; many single-panel comic gags. #1 (Mar 1971; Rosenbaum painted-c, 84 pages, violence/semi-nudity and bondage-c; 2-page spread Boris Vallejo-a); #2 (Jul 1971; Photo-c; 84 pages; teenage Haiti slave ships-s; 2-page spread with Boris Vallejo-a?). In Nightmare and Psycho watch for huge growth potential in the Al Hewetson Human Gargoyles series! This was one of the best-written series ever in horror comics, having inspired the likes of Stephen King! Nightmare has Green Gargoyles in Annual #1, Living Gargoyles in 6, Gargoyle Trilogy-s in 9 (3 parts complete in 1 issue); Human Gargoyles-s in 10, 13-15, 19, 20, 23; Nightmare #10 has 1-page Wrightson-a in Frogs-s; Nightmare has H. P. Lovecraft's Saggoth Chronicles/Necronomicon-s in 9, 15, 19, 20; Nightmare #20 has first pro John Byrne, remains the single hottest Skywald; Psycho #8 has first appearance and origin of Edward and Mina Sartyros, the Human Gargoyles, classic series continued in Nightmare; Psycho #9 has1-page Wrightson-a in Frogs preview; Scream #6 has Saga of the Victims/I am Horror, classic GGA Hewetson series begins through to #11; plus there are many vampire, werewolf and Frankenstein stories and the ever popular horror-mood issues! The higher numbers all had small print runs and are much more difficult to locate in any grade (Nightmare and Psycho #20 up and Scream #8-11). If you plan on buying these mags, get them now, before none are available on the market.

Warren mags continue to fly out the door. Last year most of the demand was for reading copies. But recently demand has shifted to highest-grade-available copies. Most of the Warrens on the market came from the Warren warehouse when they folded nearly 20 years ago. The Warren warehouse copies were much handled and *not* bagged, thus the average condition was only in the FN range. The Warren warehouse copies have given the illusion that NM copies are common. Check again and you will see that VF and better are getting tough in strictly graded copies! Strict NM copies are virtually nonexistent with today's strict standards. Rumors of **CGC** moving to **grading mags** have stirred up high-grade demand. Warren will be one of the first things that people will demand in slabbed mags. If CGC officially announces mag slabbing, watch for demand to soar to a fever pitch! The squarebound issues are actually the easiest to find in VF/NM or better. The round-bound issues damage easily due to excess weight to their fragile spines. Demand for the 1970s Marvel B&W mags is again growing fast and has also shifted from reading to high-grade copies.

Here is a forgotten cool Warren related and unlisted item: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales of Horror" (Catlan Communications Pub; 64 pages, hardcover, 85% color and 15% B&W; Sep 1985). #NN (all reprints of Poe story issues from Warren comic mags; all Richard Corben art; autographed by Rich Corben; each is serially numbered out of only 350 copies total printed).

We are having a very hard time keeping **Archie** Teen titles and **Harvey** cartoon titles from 1950-1972 in stock. If you are a dealer who says these do not sell, then sell them to me. In huge demand are: the circa 1960 monster cover Archies, all pre-1968 Josie and Sabrina, Laugh/Pep issues with super-hero backups. Katy Keene is selling again, including Wilbur, Suzie and other titles with backups. The **Red Circle** super-hero and horror titles are in steady and rising demand. The Harvey cartoon titles are usually only found in G to FN, and prices remain too low in Guide in those grades. Hot Stuff has been the most requested title lately, and we have sold 50% of our stock in the last six months!

Marvel super-hero comics of the 1969-1974 era have relentless demand in all grades! Until recently reading copies sold best, but that has shifted to VF or better copies. Avengers and Daredevil have been particularly hard to keep in stock. Most of these are still in the very affordable $10-$30 range, with low supply and huge demand. We highly recommend this area for growth potential for the next one to five years!

We have noticed an increase in demand for **IW** and **Super** reprint comics of the 1958-1964 era. These

THE MARKET

have been steadily rising in value in Overstreet. Fans have been giving them a try. What they have discovered are 40-year-old comics, mostly under $20, with a lot of cool Pre-Code contents. It is notable that IW and Super reprint comics carried no Comic Code on the covers. With the great variety of contents, low prices & finite total output, these are attractive to collect.

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The big **San Diego show** has been over for a month and we have returned to the day-to-day pattern of business. Speaking of the comic convention, one of the aspects of the show that we enjoy is the sheer volume of comics that we see in the hands of other dealers. Old comics that we get to examine by the hundreds; which means we get to see the defects and restoration to many, many comics. The large number of **restored comics** amazes me.

I bring up restoration out of curiosity, more than anything. Does anyone submit comics for restoration anymore? Is there still money in it for the few established restorative pros? I sell restored books. All of us accept them into inventory, one way or another. The customer reluctance to buy them has always been an issue. But, restored books do sell. They sell at prices slightly or greatly reduced from Overstreet (in grade). They sell after frequent price negotiations and some strenuous arguments over grading standards. They become more interesting to buyers when they are priced at a small percentage of Overstreet's unrestored value. I find that CGC'd, pink label, restoreds are of less interest than non-slabbed restored comics. That pink label wears like the Mark of Cain around those particular comics. That pink label ought to be red in color! All the interest stops dead at those comics! And if the restoration community is still generating newly restored comics, then the market continues to swell with comics of questionable marketability.

I know that the upcoming **Overstreet Grading Guide** will have to address restored comics in some detail. The market needs to find a clear evaluation process to assess a dollar figure assigned to restored comics. Several systems have been suggested: Assigning three levels of restoration and then attaching values based on the appropriate level. Grading restoration on a 10-point scale similar to the current 10-point scale in use for unrestored comics. Overstreet publishes a system utilizing multiples of Guide over the original, unrestored value of a comic, now restored. The math works but the buyers I sell to are unfamiliar with the system and don't necessarily buy into it. My personal feeling---can't seem to find a system that fits the bill. Maybe there isn't one. Maybe attaching an "R" as the grade and a random value based loosely upon Overstreet is the way to go. Obviously, identifying a restored comic before it hits the market allows for low, fair pricing at the other end. Now, finding the restoration—that's a marketplace report for the future!

GOLDEN AGE: Atomic Attack #7 NM- $160; Black Terror #20 FN- $130; Heroic Comics #1 FN CGC 6.0 $500; Impact #2 FN+ $30; More Fun #38 VG+ $600; Mysteries Weird & Strange #7 FN- $65; Quick-Trigger Western #16 FN/VF $48; Phantom Witch Doctor #1 VG- $80; Rangers Comics #31 FN/VF $100; Superman #3 CGC 5.5 FN- $1,700; Weird Chills #3 VG+ $100; Weird Comics #4 CGC 8.0 VF $750.

SILVER AGE: Amazing Spider-Man #24 VF- $125, #45 VF $60, #59 VF $42, #64 VF+ $38; Avengers #14 NM- $180; Conan #4 NM- $40; Daredevil #5 VF $160, #12 VF- $31; Fantastic Four #9 VG $150, #56 VF $40, Annual #1 FN $162; Hulk #6 GD/VG $185, #116 NM- $31; Silver Surfer #2 VF/NM $135; Tarzan #100 NM- $32; Wonder Woman #106 VG+ $50; X-Men #8 FN+ $100, #10 FN+ $100, #13 FN+ $90.

BRONZE AGE: Defenders #10 NM- $40; Frankenstein Monster #1 VF $30, #6 NM $12; Giant-Size Marvel Triple Action #1 NM- $16; Tomb of Dracula #2 MT- $60, #8 NM $35; War Is Hell #9 NM $45.

Opinions expressed in CBM *"Market Reports" are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.*

FUNNIES FARRAGO

[continued from page 23]

pictorial inventions that reveal aspects of Toad's character, say, while at the same time provoking the risibilities. Sometimes this is effected by pictures that contradict the accompanying prose narrative, sometimes by simple visual comedy.

Grahame might not have been too keen about the Disney version. Disney's animals have personality and human dimension, but there's little of their natural setting in the film. The all-encompassing Nature of which we are all a part is altogether missing. But it is present in every knotty line of Plessix's drawings. I think Grahame would have been pleased.

And next time, we can, if the pirates don't imitate a draggin' lady and hide up in a canyon, take a look at the last of the triumphant trio who set the examples for adventure strip cartooning. ●

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